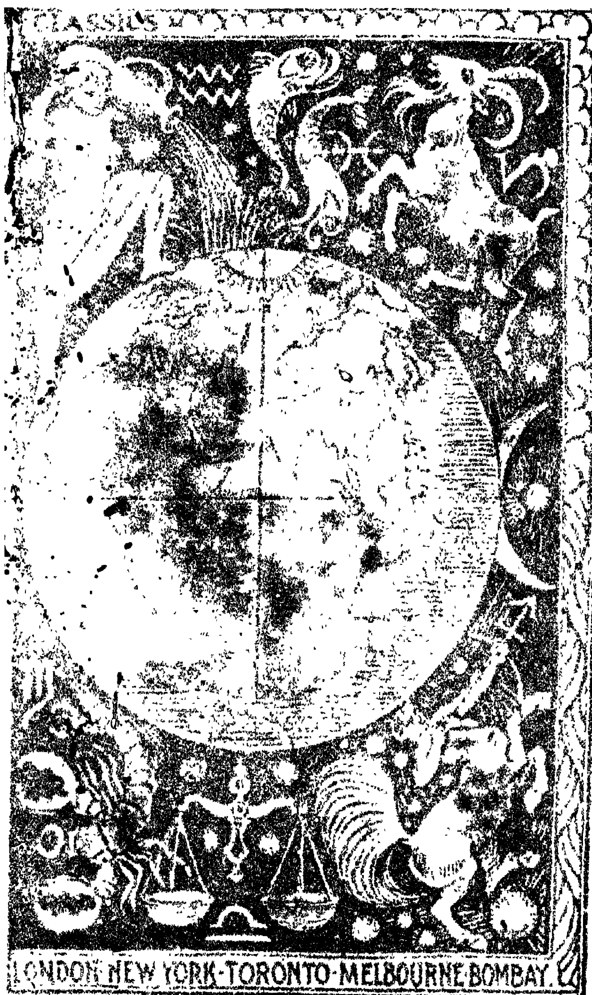

CASSELL'S
LONDON NEW YORK·TORONTO·MELBOURNE·BOMBAY.

The World's Classics

CXCII

SELECTED ENGLISH LETTERS

(XV–XIX CENTURIES)

OXFORD: HORACE HART
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

SELECTED ENGLISH LETTERS

(XV-XIX CENTURIES)

ARRANGED BY

M. DUCKITT & H. WRAGG



HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON, EDINBURGH, GLASGOW
NEW YORK, TORONTO, MELBOURNE & BOMBAY

This volume of 'Selected English Letters' was first published in 'The World's Classics' in 1913.

PREFACE

THIS anthology has been compiled with rather mixed motives. First, 'all for our delight'—a rule that editors sometimes observe, and occasionally acknowledge; then, with the desire to interest as large a section of the public as may be. Here is a medley of gay, grave, frivolous, homely, religious, sociable, refined, philosophic, and feminine,—something for every mood, and for the proper study of mankind. We do not hope to satisfy all critics, but we do not anticipate that we shall please none. Our difficulty has been that of choice. Many pleasant companions we have had to pass by; to strike from our list many excellent letters. Those that remain are intended to present as complete a portrait of the writer as space permits. Occasionally it was some feature of the age, some nicety of manners, some contrast in point of view, that obtained inclusion.

Into such an anthology the ordinary reader prefers to dip at random, looking for old friends or new faces, and has his reward. But if he is resolute to read letters in chronological order, he will also, we hope, find in our selection some trace

of the development of the Epistolary art, as, rising through earlier naiveties and formalities to the grace and *bel air* of the great Augustans, it slides into the freer, if less dignified, utterance of an age which, startled by cries of 'Equality' at its birth, has concerned itself less with form than with individuality and sincerity of expression.

Three letters are included of which the originals were penned in Latin. In a few cases the spelling and punctuation have been modernized.

Our best thanks are due to Mr. J. C. Smith, whose kind criticism and inspiring suggestions have been of inestimable service to us in the preparation of this work.

M. D.
H. W.

CONTENTS

SELECTED ENGLISH LETTERS

SIR THOMAS MORE

1478–1535

To Margaret Roper

'Wyth a cole' from prison

[1535.]

Myne owne good doughter, our lorde be thanked I am in good helthe of bodye, and in good quiet of minde: and of worldly thynges I no more desyer then I have. I beseche hym make you all mery in the hope of heaven. And such thynges as I somewhat longed to talke with you all, concerning the worlde to come, our Lord put theim into your myndes, as I trust he dothe, and better to, by his holy spirite: who blesse you and preserve you all. Written wyth a cole by your tender loving father, who in his pore prayers forgetteth none of you all, nor your babes, nor your nurses, nor your good husbandes, nor your good husbandes shrewde wyves, nor your fathers shrewde wyfe neither, nor our other frendes. And thus fare ye hartely well for lack of paper.

Thomas More, knight.

Our Lorde kepe me continuallye true, faithfull and playne, to the contrarye whereof I beseche hym hartelye never to suffer me live. For as for longe life (as I have often tolde the Megge) I neyther looke for, nor long for, but am well content

to goe, yf God call me hence to morowe. And I thanke our lorde, I knowe no person living, that I woulde had one philippe for my sake : of whiche minde I am more gladde then of all the worlde.

Recommend me to your shrewde wil, and mine other sonnes, and to John Harris my frende, and your selfe knoweth to whome els, and to my shrewde wife above all, and God preserve you all and make and kepe you his servantes all.

3

MARGARET ROPER

1505–1544

To Sir Thomas More

Reply to the above

[1534.]

Myne owne moste entierelye beloved father, I thynke my self never hable to geve you sufficiente thankes, for the inestimable coumforte my poore hearte received in the readyng of youre moste lovynge and godlye letter, representing to me, the cleare shynyng bryghtenesse of youre soule, the pure temple of the holy spirite of God, which I doubte not shall perpetuallye reste in you and you in hym. Father, if all the worlde hadde bene geven to me, as I be saved it hadde bene a small pleasure, in comparison of the pleasure I conceived of the treasure of youre letter, whiche thoughe it were written with a cole, is woorthye in myne opinion to be wrytten in letters of golde. Father, what moved them to shytte you uppe againe, we can nothynge heare. But surelye I coniecture that when they considered that you wer of so temperate mind, that you were contented to abyde there all your lyfe with suche libertie, they thought it wer never possible to enclyne you to theyr will, excepte it were by restrayning you from the church, and the companye of my good mother youre deare wyfe and us youre chyldren and bedesfolke. But father this chaunce was not straunge to you. For I shal not forgeat howe you tolde us when we were

with you in the gardeyne, that these thinges wer like ynoughe to chaunce you shortlye after. Father I have manye tymes rehearsed to myne owne coumfort and dyvers others, your fashyon and wordes ye hadde to us when we were laste with you : for which I trust by the grace of god to be the better while I live, and when I am departed oute of this frayle life, which I praye God I maye passe and ende in his true obedient service, after the wholesome counsayle and fruitful exaumple of living I have had (good father) of you, whom I pray god geve me grace to folowe : which I shal the better thorow the assistaunce of your devoute prayers, the speciall staye of my frayltie. Father I am sory I have no lenger laysure at this time to talke with you, the chief comfort of my life, I trust to have occasion to write again shortly. I trust I have your daily prayer and blessing.

Your most loving obedient daughter and bedeswomā Margaret Roper, which daily and howrely is boūde to pray for you, for whom she prayeth in this wise, that our lord of his infinite mercye geve you of hys hevenly comfort, and so to assist you with hys speciall grace, that ye never in any thing declyne from hys blessed will, but live and dye his true obedient servaunt. Amen.

ROGER ASCHAM

1515–1568

To Lady Jane Grey

A most accomplished maiden

Augsberg, 18 *Jan.* 1551.

Most Illustrious Lady,

In this long travel of mine, I have passed over wide tracts of country, and seen the largest cities, I have studied the customs, institutes, laws, and religion of many men and diverse nations, with as much diligence as I was able: but in all this variety of subjects, nothing has caused in me so much wonder as my having fallen upon you last summer, a maiden of noble birth, and that too in the absence of your tutor, in the hall of your most noble family, and at a time when others, both men and women, give themselves up to hunting and pleasures, you, a divine maiden, reading carefully in Greek the *Phaedo* of the divine Plato; and happier in being so occupied than because you derive your birth, both on your father's side, and on your mother's, from kings and queens! Go on then, most accomplished maiden, to bring honour on your country, happiness on your parents, glory to yourself, credit to your tutor, congratulation to all your friends, and the greatest admiration to all strangers!

O happy Elmar in having such a pupil, and happier still you, in having such a tutor . . . I ask two things of you, my dear Elmar, for I suppose

you will read this letter, that you will persuade the Lady Jane to write me a letter in Greek as soon as possible; for she promised she would do so . . . I have also lately written to John Sturm, and told him that she had promised. Take care that I get a letter soon from her as well as from you. It is a long way for letters to come, but John Hales will be a most convenient letter-carrier and bring them safely. . . .

To Lady Clarke

An offer of assistance

[London], 15 *Jan.* 1554.

Your remarkable love of virtue and zeal for learning, most illustrious lady, joined with such talents and perseverance, are worthy of great praise in themselves, and greater still because you are a woman, but greatest of all because you are a lady of the court; where there are many other occupations for ladies, besides learning, and many other pleasures besides the practice of the virtues. This double praise is further enhanced by the two patterns that you have proposed to yourself to follow, the one furnished you by the court, the other by your family. I mean our illustrious queen Mary, and your noble grandfather, Thomas More—a man whose virtues go to raise England above all other nations. . . .

I am led to write thus not altogether by my admiration of you, but partly by my own wish and more from the nature of my own office. It was I who was invited some years ago from the University of Cambridge by your mother, Margaret

Roper—a lady worthy of her great father, and of you her daughter—to the house of your kinsman, Lord Giles Alington, to teach you and her other children the Greek and Latin tongues; but at that time no offers could induce me to leave the University. It is sweet to me to bear in mind this request of your mother's, and I now not only remind you thereof, but would offer you, now that I am at court, if not to fulfil her wishes, yet to do my best to fulfil them, were it not that you have so much learning in yourself, and also the aid of those two learned men, Cole and Christopherson, so that you need no help from me, unless in their absence you make use of my assistance, and if you like, abuse it.

I write thus not because of any talents I possess (for I know they are very small) but because of my will (which I know is very great), and because of the opportunity long wished for and now granted me. For by favour of that great bishop the Lord Stephen of Winchester, I have been fetched away from the University to serve our illustrious queen at court, and that too in such a post, that I can there follow the same mode of life for the discharge of my duties as I did at the University for study. My office is to write Latin letters for the queen, and I hope I shall fulfil that office, if not with ability, yet faithfully, diligently, and unblameably . . . Farewell, most accomplished lady!

SIR FRANCIS BACON

1561–1626

To Sir Thomas Bodley

With a copy of his book

[*Nov.* 1605.]

Sir,

I think no man may more truly say with the Psalm *Multum incola fuit anima mea*, than myself. For I do confess, since I was of any understanding, my mind hath in effect been absent from that I have done; and in absence are many errors which I do willingly acknowledge; and amongst the rest this great one that led the rest; that knowing myself by inward calling to be fitter to hold a book than to play a part, I have led my life in civil causes; for which I was not very fit by nature, and more unfit by the preoccupation of my mind. Therefore calling myself home, I have now for a time enjoyed myself; whereof likewise I desire to make the world partaker. My labours (if I may so term that which was the comfort of my other labours) I have dedicated to the King; desirous, if there be any good in them, it may be as the fat of a sacrifice, incensed to his honour: and the second copy I have sent unto you, not only in good affection, but in a kind of congruity, in regard of your great and rare desert of learning. For books are the shrines where the saint is, or is believed to be; and you having built an Ark to save learning from deluge, deserve propriety in any new instrument or engine, whereby learning should be improved or advanced.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE

1605–1682

To his son Thomas

Fatherly commendations

[*c.* 1667.]

I RECEAVED yours, and would not deferre to send vnto you before you sayled, which I hope will come vnto you; for in this wind, neither can Reare-admirall Kempthorne come to you, nor you beginne your voyage. I am glad you like Lucan so well. I wish more military men could read him; in this passage you mention, there are noble straynes; and such as may well affect generous minds. Butt I hope you are more taken with the verses then the subject, and rather embrace the expression then the example. And this I the rather hint unto you, because the like, though in another waye, is sometimes practised in the king's shipps, when, in desperate cases, they blowe up the same. For though I know you are sober and considerative, yet knowing you also to be of great resolution; and having also heard from ocular testimonies with what vndaunted and persevering courage you have demeaned yourself in great difficulties; and knowing your captaine to bee a stout and resolute man; and with all the cordiall friendshippe that is between you; I cannot omitt my earnest prayers vnto God to deliver you from such a temptation. Hee that goes to warre must patiently submitt vnto the various

accidents thereof. To bee made prisoner by an vnequall and overruling power, after a due resistance, is no disparagement; butt upon a carelesse surprizall or faynt opposition; and you have so good a memorie that you cannot forgett many examples thereof, even of the worthiest commanders in your beloved Plutark. God hath given you a stout, butt a generous and mercifull heart withall; and in all your life you could never behold any person in miserie butt with compassion and relief; which hath been notable in you from a child: so have you layd up a good foundation for God's mercy; and, if such a disaster should happen, Hee will, without doubt, mercifully remember you. How euer, let God that brought you in the world in his owne good time, lead you through it; and in his owne season bring you out of it; and without such wayes as are displeasing vnto him. When you are at Cales, see if you can get a box of the Jesuits' powder at easier rate, and bring it in the bark, not in powder. I am glad you haue receaued the bill of exchange for Cales; if you should find occasion to make vse thereof. Enquire farther at Tangier of the minerall water you told mee, which was neere the towne, and whereof many made use. Take notice of such plants as you meet with, either upon the Spanish or African coast; and if you knowe them not, putt some leaves into a booke, though carelessely, and not with that neatenesse as in your booke at Norwich. Enquire after any one who hath been at Fez; and learne what you can of the present state of that place, which hath been so famous in the description of Leo and others. The mercifull providence of God go with you. *Impellant animae lintea Thraciae.*

To his son Edward

Centenarians

15 *Dec.* [1679.]

Deare Sonne,

Some thinck that great age superannuates persons from the vse of physicall meanes, or that at a hundred yeares of age 't is either a folly or a shame to vse meanes to liue longer, and yet I haue knowne many send to mee for their seuerall troubles at a hundred yeares of age, and this day a poore woeman being a hundred and three yeares and a weeke old sent to mee to giue her some ease of the colick. The *macrobii* and long liuers which I haue knowne heere haue been of the meaner and poorer sort of people. Tho. Parrot was butt a meane or rather poore man. Your brother Thomas gaue two pence a weeke to John More, a scauenger, who dyed in the hundred and second yeare of his life; and 'twas taken the more notice of that the father of Sir John Shawe, who marryed my Lady Killmorey, and liueth in London, I say that his father, who had been a vintner, liued a hundred and two yeares, or neere it, and dyed about a yeere agoe. God send us to number our dayes and fitt ourselues for a better world.

JOHN MILTON

1608–1674

To a Cambridge Friend

The choice of a profession

[1631-2.]

Sir,

Besides that in sundry other respects I must acknowledge me to profit by you whenever we meet, you are often to me, and were yesterday especially, as a good watchman to admonish that the hours of the night pass on (for so I call my life, as yet obscure and unserviceable to mankind), and that the day with me is at hand, wherein Christ commands all to labour, while there is light. Which because I am persuaded you do to no other purpose than out of a true desire that God should be honoured in every one, I therefore think myself bound, though unasked, to give you account, as oft as occasion is, of this my tardy moving, according to the precept of my conscience, which I firmly trust is not without God. Yet now I will not strain for any set apology, but only refer myself to what my mind shall have at any time to declare herself at her best ease.

But if you think, as you said, that too much love of learning is in fault, and that I have given up myself to dream away my years in the arms of studious retirement, like Endymion with the moon, as the tale of Latmus goes; yet consider that if it were no more but the mere love of learning—whether it proceed from a principle bad, good, or

natural—it could not have held out thus long against so strong opposition on the other side of every kind. For, if it be bad, why should not all the fond hopes that forward youth and vanity are fledge with, together with gain, pride, and ambition, call me forward more powerfully than a poor, regardless, and unprofitable sin of curiosity should be able to withhold me; whereby a man cuts himself off from all action, and becomes the most helpless, pusillanimous, and unweaponed creature in the world, the most unfit and unable to do that which all mortals most aspire to—either to be useful to his friends or to offend his enemies? Or, if it be to be thought a natural proneness, there is against that a much more potent inclination inbred, which about this time of a man's life solicits most—the desire of house and family of his own; to which nothing is esteemed more helpful than the early entering into credible employment, and nothing more hindering than this affected solitariness. And though this were enough, yet there is to this another act, if not of pure, yet of refined nature, no less available to dissuade prolonged obscurity—a desire of honour and repute and immortal fame, seated in the breast of every true scholar; which all make haste to by the readiest ways of publishing and divulging conceived merits—as well those that shall, as those that never shall, obtain it. Nature, therefore, would presently work the more prevalent way, if there were nothing but this inferior bent of herself to restrain her. Lastly, the love of learning, as it is the pursuit of something good, it would sooner follow the more excellent and supreme good known and presented, and so be

quickly diverted from the empty and fantastic chase of shadows and notions, to the solid good flowing from due and timely obedience to that command in the Gospel set out by the terrible seasing of him that hid the talent.

It is more probable, therefore, that not the endless delight of speculation, but this very consideration of that great commandment, does not press forward, as soon as many do, to undergo, but keeps off, with a sacred reverence and religious advisement how *best* to undergo—not taking thought of being *late*, so it give advantage to be more *fit*; for those that were latest lost nothing, when the master of the vineyard came to give each one his hire. And here I am come to a stream-head, copious enough to disburden itself, like Nilus, at seven mouths into an ocean. But then I should also run into a reciprocal contradiction of ebbing and flowing at once, and do that which I excuse myself for not doing—'preach and not preach.' Yet, that you may see that I am something suspicious of myself, and do take notice of a certain belatedness in me, I am the bolder to send you some of my nightward thoughts some while since, because they come in not altogether unfitly, made up in a Petrarchian stanza, which I told you of:

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
  Stol'n on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
  My hasting days fly on with full career,
  But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth
  That I to manhood am arrived so near;
  And inward ripeness doth much less appear
  That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.

Yet be it less, or more, or soon, or slow,
  It shall be still in strictest measure even
  To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven.
  All is, if I have grace to use it so,
  As ever in my great taskmaster's eye.

By this I believe you may well repent of having made mention at all of this matter; for, if I have not all this while won you to this, I have certainly wearied you of it. This, therefore, alone may be a sufficient reason for me to keep me as I am, lest having thus tired you singly, I should deal worse with a whole congregation, and spoil all the patience of a parish; for I myself do not only see my own tediousness, but now grow offended with it, that has hindered me thus long from coming to the last and best *period* of my letter, and that which must now chiefly work my pardon, that I am your true and unfeigned *friend.*

To Leonard Philaras, the Athenian

The blind poet [1]

Westminster, 28 *Sept.* 1654.

I HAVE always been devotedly attached to the literature of Greece, and particularly to that of your Athens; and have never ceased to cherish the persuasion that that city would one day make me ample recompense for the warmth of my regard. The ancient genius of your renowned country has favoured the completion of my prophecy in presenting me with your friendship and esteem. Though I was known to you only by my writings, and we were removed to such a

[1] From the Latin.

distance from each other, you most courteously addressed me by letter; and when you unexpectedly came to London, and saw me who could no longer see, my affliction, which causes none to regard me with greater admiration, and perhaps many even with feelings of contempt, excited your tenderest sympathy and concern. You would not suffer me to abandon the hope of recovering my sight; and informed me you had an intimate friend at Paris, Dr. Thevenot, who was particularly celebrated in disorders of the eyes, whom you would consult about mine, if I would enable you to lay before him the causes and the symptoms of the complaint. I will do what you desire, lest I should seem to reject that aid which perhaps may be offered me by Heaven. It is now, I think, about ten years since I perceived my vision to grow weak and dull; and at the same time I was troubled with pain in my kidneys and bowels, accompanied with flatulency. In the morning, if I began to read, as was my custom, my eyes instantly ached intensely, but were refreshed after a little corporeal exercise. The candle which I looked at, seemed as it were encircled with a rainbow. Not long after the sight in the left part of the left eye (which I lost some years before the other) became quite obscured, and prevented me from discerning any object on that side. The sight in my other eye has now been gradually and sensibly vanishing away for about three years; some months before it had entirely perished, though I stood motionless, everything which I looked at seemed in motion to and fro. A stiff cloudy vapour seemed to have settled on my forehead and temples, which usually occasions a sort of somnolent pressure upon my

eyes, and particularly from dinner till the evening. So that I often recollect what is said of the poet Phineas in the *Argonautics*:

A stupor deep his cloudy temples bound,
And when he walked he seemed as whirling round,
Or in a feeble trance he speechless lay.

I ought not to omit that while I had any sight left, as soon as I lay down on my bed and turned on either side, a flood of light used to gush from my closed eyelids. Then, as my sight became daily more impaired, the colours became more faint and were emitted with a certain inward crackling sound; but at present, every species of illumination being, as it were, extinguished, there is diffused around me nothing but darkness, or darkness mingled and streaked with an ashy brown. Yet the darkness in which I am perpetually immersed seems always, both by night and day, to approach nearer to white than black; and when the eye is rolling in its socket, it admits a little particle of light, as through a chink. And though your physician may kindle a small ray of hope, yet I make up my mind to the malady as quite incurable; and I often reflect, that as the wise man admonishes, days of darkness are destined to each of us, the darkness which I experience, less oppressive than that of the tomb, is, owing to the singular goodness of the Deity, passed amid the pursuits of literature and the cheering salutations of friendship. But if, as is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God,' why may not any one acquiesce in the privation of his sight, when God has so amply furnished his mind and his

conscience with eyes? While He so tenderly provides for me, while He so graciously leads me by the hand, and conducts me on the way, I will, since it is His pleasure, rather rejoice than repine at being blind. And, my dear Philaras, whatever may be the event, I wish you adieu with no less courage and composure than if I had the eyes of a lynx.

JOHN EVELYN

1620–1706

To Samuel Pepys

In retirement at Wotton

Wotton, 2 *Aug.* 1692.

I have been philosophizing and world-despising in the solitudes of this place, whither I am retired to pass and mourn the absence of my worthiest friend. Here is wood and water, meadows and mountains, the Dryads and Hamadryads; but here's no Mr. Pepys, no Dr. Gale. Nothing of all the cheer in the parlour that I taste; all's insipid, and all will be so to me, till I see and enjoy you again. I long to know what you do, and what you think, because I am certain you do both what is worthy the knowing and imitation. On Monday next will Mr. Bentley resume his lecture, I think, at Bow Church: I fear I shall hardly get through this wilderness by that time. Pray give him your wonted confidence if you can, and tell him how unhappily I am entangled. I hope, however, to get home within this fortnight, and about the end of October to my hyemation in Dover Street. My son is gone with the Lord Lieutenant, and our new relation, Sir Cyril Wych, into Ireland: I look they should return wondrous statesmen, or else they had as well have stayed at home. I am here with Boccalini, and Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*, and look down upon the world with wondrous contempt,

when I consider for what we keep such a mighty bustle. *O fortunate* Mr. Pepys! who knows, possesses, and enjoys all that's worth the seeking after. Let me live among your inclinations, and I shall be happy.

To the same

An old man's occupations

Wotton, 22 *July*, 1700.

I could no longer suffer this old servant of mine to pass and repass so near Clapham without a particular account of your health and all your happy family. You will now inquire what I do here? Why, as the patriarchs of old, I pass the days in the fields, among horses and oxen, sheep, cows, bulls, and sows, *et cetera pecora campi*. We have, thank God! finished our hay harvest prosperously. I am looking after my hinds, providing carriage and tackle against reaping time and sowing. What shall I say more? *Venio ad voluptates agricolarum*, which Cicero, you know, reckons amongst the most becoming diversions of old age; and so I render it. This without: now within doors, never was any matron more busy than my wife, disposing of our plain country furniture for a naked old extravagant house, suitable to our employments. She has a dairy, and distaffs, for *lac, linum, et lanam*, and is become a very Sabine. But can you thus hold out? Will my friend say; is philosophy, Gresham College, and the example of Mr. Pepys, and agreeable conversation of York Buildings, quite forgotten and abandoned? No, no! *Naturam expellas furca tamen usque recurret*. Know I have

been ranging of no fewer than thirty large cases of books, destined for a competent standing library, during four or five days wholly destitute of my young coadjutor, who, upon some pretence of being much engaged in the mathematics, and desiring he may continue his course at Oxford till the beginning of August, I have wholly left it to him. You will now suspect something by this disordered hand; truly I was too happy in these little domestic affairs, when, on the sudden, as I was about my books in the library, I found myself sorely attacked with a shivering, followed by a feverish indisposition, and a strangury, so as to have kept, not my chamber only, but my bed, till very lately, and with just so much strength as to scribble these lines to you. For the rest, I give God thanks for this gracious warning, my great age calling upon me *sarcinam componere* every day expecting it, who have still enjoyed a wonderful course of bodily health for forty years. . . .

DAME DOROTHY BROWNE

1621–1685

To her daughter in London

Three interesting postscripts

[Norfolk, 28 *June, c.* 1679.]

Deare Daughter,

I have received all the things, to the great content of the owners, who returne you many thankes. Thay ar indeed very well chose things of all sorts : and I give you many thanks for the troble you have had with them : I sent you Tomey's scurt and long slevs of his ould cott ; I hope you have them. On Mr. Felden it seemes took it last Wadinsday, and sayd hee would deliver it him selfe. Wee dayly wish for the new cloths ; all our linen being worne out but shefts, and Tomey would give all his stock to see his briches. I bless God wee ar all well as I hope you ar. Tomey presents his dutty, your sisters all love and services.

[4 *July.*]

Good Daughter,

I must troble you once more abought my cosen Tenoson. She would macke a manto gown of the grene and whight silke you sent down for a peticot, but she wants two yards, and as much slit grene sarsinat as will line it in sight. I pray send nurs to gett it and lett mee know what it com to, and I will send you the mony. I sayes my

Cossen Cradock might send it me by the choch for she would have it as sonne as possible. I bless God wee ar all in helth, and Tomey much longing for his briches.

[5 *July*.]

Tomey have received his cloues, and is much delighted, and sends you and his mother and grandmother dutty and thanckes, and meanes to war them carfully.

GEORGE, LORD BERKELEY

1628–1698

To Samuel Pepys[1]

Honourable Acquittal

Berkeley House, 23 *Feb.* 1677–8.

Good Mr. Pepys,

Though I thank you for the favour of your letter, yet I confess myself both much surprised and troubled to receive a letter from you upon such an occasion: so is my wife, who professes herself wholly innocent of any crime of charging you in thought, word, or deed, and hopes you will do her that right to believe so of her. My daughter Berkeley says she expressed some trouble that the friend she recommended had not success, and that she was told the Commissioners of the Navy did report they had given the same recommendations of the person she proposed, as they did of him that was accepted, for the lieutenant's place; which my daughter, supposing to be true, wondered the more he lost the preferment: but, by the copies enclosed in your's, it appears her Ladyship was very much misinformed. As for Mrs. Henrietta, she is extremely troubled in saying any thing that gave you offence; and though she did not in the least intend it, yet she begs your pardon. And now, my good friend, though I am not under any accusation, and therefore need not say any

[1] Cf. Letter on p. 45.

thing to vindicate myself, yet give me leave, upon this occasion, to assure you, that there is no person has a better opinion of you than myself, nor is more sensible of your particular civilities to me; which I should be very glad to make a return of when in my power to serve you: and give me leave to add further, without flattery to you, and with great sincerity, that I believe our gracious master, His Majesty, is so fortunate in employing you in his service, that, if he should lose you, it would be very difficult for His Majesty to find a successor so well qualified in all respects for his service, if we consider both your integrity, vast abilities, industry, and zealous affections for his service; and, if His Majesty were asked the question, I will hold ten to one His Majesty declares himself of my opinion; so will I believe all that know you, more especially our fellow-traders that are so conversant with you and obliged by you.

This is asserted as a great truth by, Sir, Your very affectionate and hearty friend and Servant.

DOROTHY OSBORNE

1628-1698

To Sir William Temple

Passing the time

[No date; *c.* 1653.]

I have been reckoning up how many faults you lay to my charge in your last letter, and I find I am severe, unjust, unmerciful, and unkind! O me! how should one do to mend all those! 'Tis work for an age, and I fear that I shall be so old before I am good, that 't will not be considerable to any body but myself whether I am so or not. . . . You ask me how I pass my time here. I can give you a perfect account, not only of what I do for the present, but what I am likely to do this seven years if I stay here so long. I rise in the morning reasonably early, and before I am ready I go round the house till I am weary of that, and then into the garden till it grows too hot for me. I then think of making me ready; and when that's done I go into my father's chamber; from thence to dinner, where my cousin Molle and I sit in great state in a room and at a table that would hold a great many more. After dinner we sit and talk till Mr. P. comes in question, and then I am gone. The heat of the day is spent in reading or working; and about six or seven o'clock I walk out into a common that lies hard by the house, where

a great many young wenches keep sheep and cows, and sit in the shade singing of ballads; I go to them, and compare their voices and beauty to some ancient shepherdesses that I have read of, and find a vast difference there; but, trust me, I think these are as innocent as those could be. I talk to them, and find *they want nothing to make them the happiest people in the world but the knowledge that they are so.* Most commonly, while we are in the middle of our discourse, one looks about her, and spies her cows going into the corn, and then away they all run as if they had wings at their heels. I that am not so nimble stay behind, and when I see them driving home their cattle think it is time for me to return too. When I have supped I go into the garden, and so to the side of a small river that runs by it, where I sit down and wish you with me (you had best say this is not kind, neither). In earnest, it is a pleasant place, and would be more so to me if I had your company, as I sit there sometimes till I am lost with thinking; and were it not for some cruel thoughts of the crossness of my fortune, that will not let me sleep there, I should forget there were such a thing to be done as going to bed. Since I writ this, my company is increased by two, my brother Harry, and a fair niece, my brother Peyton's daughter. She is so much a woman that I am almost ashamed to say I am her aunt, and so pretty, that if I had any design to gain a servant I should not like her company; but I have none, and therefore I shall endeavour to keep her here as long as I can persuade her father to spare her, for she will easily consent to it, having so much of my humour (though it be

the worst thing in her) as to like a melancholy place, and little company. . . . My father is reasonably well, but keeps his chamber still; but will hardly, I am afraid, ever be so perfectly recovered as to come abroad again.

TO THE SAME

Another pretender

[No date; c. 1653.]

I COULD tell you such a story (it is too long to be written), as would make you see what I never discovered in my life before, that I am a valiant lady. In earnest, we have had such a skirmish and upon so foolish an occasion, as I cannot tell which is strangest. The Emperor and his proposals began it; I talked merrily on it till I saw my brother put on his sober face, and could hardly then believe he was in earnest. It seems he was; for when I had spoke freely my meaning it wrought so with him, as to fetch up all that lay upon his stomach: all the people that I had ever in my life refused were brought again upon the stage, like Richard the Third's ghosts, to reproach me withal, and all the kindness his discoveries could make I had for you was laid to my charge; my best qualities, if I have any that are good, served but for aggravations of my fault, and I was allowed to have wit, and understanding, and discretion, in all other things, that it might appear I had none in this. Well, 't was a pretty lecture, and I grew warm with it after a while. In short, we came so near to an absolute falling out that 't was time to give over, and we said so much then

that we have hardly spoken a word together since. But 't is wonderful to see what courtesies and legs pass between us, and as before we were thought the kindest brother and sister, we are certainly now the most complimental couple in England: it is a strange change, and I am very sorry for it, but I'll swear I know not how to help it. . . .

To the same

A disappointing preacher

[No date; *c.* 1653.]

. . . God forgive me, I was as near laughing yesterday where I should not: would you believe that I had the grace to go to hear a sermon upon a week-day? In earnest, 't is true, and Mr. Marshall was the man that preached, but never any body was so defeated. He is so famed that I expected rare things from him, and seriously I listened to him at first with as much reverence and attention as if he had been St. Paul. And what do you think he told us? why, that if there were no kings, no queens, no lords, no ladies, no gentlemen or gentlewomen in the world, it would be no loss at all to God Almighty: this he said over some forty times, which made me remember it, whether I would or not. The rest was much at this rate, entertained with the prettiest odd phrases, that I had the most ado to look soberly enough for the place I was in that ever I had in my life. He does not preach so always, sure; if he does, I cannot believe his sermons will do much towards the bringing

anybody to heaven more than by exercising their patience; yet I'll say that for him, he stood stoutly for tithes, though in my opinion few deserve them less than he, and it may be he would be better without them. Yet you say you are not convinced that to be miserable is the way to be good; to some natures I think it is not; but there are many of so careless and vain a temper that the least breath of good fortune swells them with so much pride, that if they were not put in mind sometimes by a sound cross or two that they are mortal, they would hardly think it possible; and though it is a sign of a servile nature, when fear produces more of reverence in us than love, yet there is more danger of forgetting one's self in a prosperous fortune than in the contrary; and affliction may be the surest though not the pleasantest guide to heaven. What think you, might I not preach with Mr. Marshall for a wager?...

To the same

The ideal husband

[No date; *c.* 1653.]

There are a great many ingredients must go to the making me happy in a husband. My cousin F. says our humours must agree, and to do that he must have that kind of breeding that I have had, and used to that kind of company; that is, he must not be so much a country gentleman as to understand nothing but hawks and dogs, and be fonder of either than of his wife; nor of the next sort of them, whose time reaches no farther than to

be justice of peace, and once in his life high sheriff, who reads no book but statutes, and studies nothing but how to make a speech interlarded with Latin, that may amaze his disagreeing poor neighbours, and fright them rather than persuade them into quietness. He must not be a thing that began the world in a free school, was sent from thence to the university, and is at his farthest when he reaches the inns of court; has no acquaintance but those of his form in those places; speaks the French he has picked out of old laws, and admires nothing but the stories he has heard of the revels that were kept there before his time. He must not be a town gallant neither, that lives in a tavern and an ordinary; that cannot imagine how an hour should be spent without company unless it be in sleeping; that makes court to all the women he sees, thinks they believe him, and laughs and is laughed at equally. Nor a travelled Monsieur, whose head is feathered inside and outside, that can talk of nothing but of dances and duels, and has courage enough to wear slashes, when every body else dies with cold to see him. He must not be a fool of no sort, nor peevish, nor ill-natured, nor proud, nor courteous; and to all this must be added, that he must love me, and I him, as much as we are capable of loving. Without all this his fortune, though never so great, would not satisfy me, and with it a very moderate one would keep me from ever repenting my disposal. . . .

To the same

The growth of friendship

[No date; *c.* 1653.]

. . . I must find you pleased and in good humour; merry as you were wont to be, when we first met, if you will not have me show that I am nothing akin to my cousin Osborne's lady. But what an age it is since we first met, and how great a change it has wrought in both of us! if there had been as great a one on my face, it would be either very handsome or very ugly. For God's sake, when we meet, let us design one day to remember old stories in, to ask one another by what degrees our friendship grew to this height 't is at. In earnest, I am lost sometimes in thinking of it; and though I can never repent of the share you have in my heart, I know not whether I gave it you willingly or not at first. No; to speak ingenuously, I think you got an interest there a good while before I thought you had any, and it grew so insensibly, and yet so fast, that all the traverses it has met with since have served rather to discover it to me than at all to hinder it.

To the same.

Wilful woman

[No date; *c.* 1653.]

I was carried yesterday abroad to a dinner that was designed for mirth, but it seems one ill-humoured person in the company is enough to put

all the rest out of tune, for I never saw people perform what they intended worse, and could not forbear telling them so ; but to excuse themselves and silence my reproaches they all agreed to say that I spoiled their jollity by wearing the most unseasonable looks that could be put on for such an occasion. I told them I knew no remedy but leaving me behind them ; that my looks were suitable to my fortune though not to a feast. Fie, I am got into my complaining humour that tires myself as well as every body else, and which (as you observe) helps not at all ; would it would leave me and that I should not always have occasion for it, but that's in nobody's power, and my Lady Talmash, that says she can do whatever she will, cannot believe whatsoever she pleases. 'T is not unpleasant, methinks, to hear her talk how at such a time she was sick, and the physicians told her she would have the small-pox and showed her where they were coming out upon her, but she bethought herself that it was not at all convenient for her to have them at that time ; some business she had that required her going abroad, and so she resolved she would not be sick nor was not. Twenty such stories as these she tells, and then falls into discourses of the strength of reason and power of philosophy till she confounds herself and all that hear her. You have no such ladies in Ireland. . . . My poor Lady Vavasor is carried to the Tower, and her situation could not excuse her, because she was acquainted by somebody that there was a plot against the Protector, and did not discover it. She has told now all that was told her, but vows she will never say from whence she had it ; we shall see whether her resolutions are as unalterable

as those of my Lady Talmash. I wonder how she behaved herself when she was married; I never yet saw anybody that did not look simply and out of countenance, nor ever knew a wedding well designed but one, and that was of two persons who had time enough I confess to contrive it, and nobody to please in it but themselves. He came down into the country where she was upon a visit, and one morning married her; as soon as they came out of the church, they took coach and came for the town, dined at an Inn by the way, and at night came into lodgings that were provided for them, where nobody knew them, and where they passed for married people of seven years' standing. The truth is I could not endure to be Mrs. Bride in a public wedding, to be made the happiest person on earth; do not take it ill, for I would endure it if I could, rather than fail, but in earnest I do not think it were possible for me; you cannot apprehend the formalities of a treaty more than I do, nor so much the success of it. Yet in earnest your father will not find my brother Peyton wanting in civility (though he is not a man of much compliment unless it be in his letters to me), nor an unreasonable person in any thing so he will allow him, out of his kindness to his wife, to set a higher value upon his sister than she deserves. I know not how he may be prejudiced upon the business, but he is not deaf to reason when it is civilly delivered, and is as easily gained with compliance and good usage as any body I know, but no other way; when he is roughly used he is like me ten times the worse for it. I make it a case of conscience to discover my faults to you as fast as I know them, that you may consider what you have to do: my aunt told me

no longer ago than yesterday, that I was the most wilful woman that ever she knew, and had an obstinacy of spirit nothing could overcome. Take heed, you see I give you fair warning. I have missed a letter this Monday, what is the reason ? By the next I shall be gone into Kent, and my other journey is laid aside, which I am not displeased at, because it would have broken our intercourse very much. Here are some verses of Cowley's ; pray tell me how you like them. It is only a piece taken out of a new thing of his. The whole is very long, and is a description of, or rather a paraphrase upon, the friendships of David and Jonathan. 'T is I think the best I have seen of his, and I like the subject because it is that I would be perfect in. Adieu !

36

KATHARINE PHILIPS

1631–1664

Orinda to the Honourable Berenice

Yielding to opinion

Priory of Cardigan, 25 *June*

Your Ladyship's last favour from Coll. P—'s was truly obliging, and carried so much of the same great soul of yours, which loves to diffuse itself in expressions of friendship to me, that it merits a great deal more acknowledgement than I am able to pay at my best condition, and am less now when my head aches, and will give me no leave to enlarge, though I have so much subject and reason; but really if my heart ached too, I could be sensible of a very great kindness and condescension in thinking me worthy of your concern, though I visibly perceive most of my letters have lost their way to your Ladyship. I beseech you be pleased first to believe I have written every post; but, secondly, since I came, and then to enquire for them, that they may be commended into your hands, where alone they can hope for a favourable residence; I am very much a sharer by sympathy, in your Ladyship's satisfaction in the converse you had in the country, and find that to that ingenious company Fortune hath been just, there being no person fitter to receive all the admiration of persons best capable to pay them, than the great *Berenice*. . . .

And now (madam) why was that a cruel question, When will you come to *Wales*? 'T is cruel to me, I confess, that it is yet in question, but I humbly beg your Ladyship to unriddle that part of your letter, for I cannot understand why you, madam, who have no persons alive to whom your birth hath submitted you, and have already by your life secured to yourself the best opinion the world can give you, should create an awe upon your own actions, from imaginary inconveniences: Happiness, I confess, is two-faced, and one is opinion; but that opinion is certainly *our own*; for it were equally ridiculous and impossible to shape our *actions* by others' *opinions*. I have had so much (and some sad) reason to discuss this principle, that I can speak with some confidence, That *none will ever be happy, who make their happiness to consist in, or be governed by the votes of other persons*. I deny not but the approbation of wise and good persons is a very necessary satisfaction; but to forbear innocent contentments, only because it's possible some fancies may be so capricious as to dispute whether I should have taken them, is, in my belief, neither better nor worse than to fast always, because there are some so superstitious in the world, that will abstain from meat, upon some score or other, upon every day in the year, that is, some upon some days, and others upon others, and some upon all. You know, madam, there is nothing so various as *vulgar opinion*, nothing so untrue to itself. Who shall then please since none can fix it? 'T is heresy (this of submitting to every blast of popular extravagancy) which I have combated in persons very dear to me; *Dear madam*, let them not have your authority for a

relapse, when I had almost committed them; but consider it without a bias, and give sentence as you see cause; and in that interim put me not off (*Dear madam*) with those chimeras, but tell me plainly what inconvenience is it to come? If it be one in earnest, I will submit, but otherwise, I am so much my own friend, and my friend's friend, as not to be satisfied with your Ladyship's taking measure of your actions by others' opinion, when I know too that the severest could find nothing in this journey that they could condemn, but your excess of charity to me, and that censure you have already supported with patience, and (notwithstanding my own consciousness of no ways deserving your sufferance upon that score) I cannot beg you to recover the reputation of your judgement in that particular, since it must be my ruin. I should now say very much for your most obliging commands to me, to write, and should beg frequent letters from your Ladyship with all possible importunity, and should by command from my *Lucasia* excuse her last rudeness (as she calls it) in giving you account of her honour for you under her own hand, but I must beg your pardon now, and out-believing all, I can say upon every one of these accounts, for really, madam, you cannot tell how to imagine any person more to any one, than I am,

Madam,
Your Ladyship's
most faithful servant,
and passionate friend,
ORINDA.

JOHN LOCKE

1632–1704

To William Molyneux

A philosopher's confidences

Oates, 26 *April*, 1695.

Sir,

You look with the eyes, and speak the language of friendship, when you make my life of much more concern to the world than your own. I take it, as it is, for an effect of your kindness, and so shall not accuse you of compliment; the mistakes and over-valuings of good-will being always sincere, even when they exceed what common truth allows. This on my side I must beg you to believe, that my life would be much more pleasant and useful to me, if you were within my reach, that I might sometimes enjoy your conversation, and, upon twenty occasions, lay my thoughts before you, and have the advantage of your judgement. I cannot complain that I have not my share of friends of all ranks, and such, whose interest, assistance, affection, and opinions too, in fit cases, I can rely on. But methinks, for all this, there is one place vacant, that I know nobody that would so well fill as yourself; I want one near me to talk freely with, *de quolibet ente*; to propose to the extravagancies that rise in my mind; one with whom I would debate several doubts and questions, to see what was in them. Meditating by one's self, is like digging in the

mine; it often, perhaps, brings up maiden earth, which never came near the light before; but whether it contains any metal in it, is never so well tried as in conversation with a knowing judicious friend who carries about with him the true touchstone, which is love of truth in a clear-thinking head. Men of parts and judgement the world usually gets hold of, and by a great mistake (that their abilities of mind are lost, if not employed in the pursuit of wealth or power) engages them in the ways of fortune and interest, which usually leave but little freedom or leisure of thought for pure disinterested truth. And such who give themselves up frankly, and in earnest to the full latitude of real knowledge, are not everywhere to be met with. Wonder not, therefore, that I wish so much for you in my neighbourhood; I should be too happy in a friend of your make, were you within my reach. But yet I cannot but wish that some business would once bring you within distance; and it is a pain to me to think of leaving the world without the happiness of seeing you.

I do not wonder that a kinsman of yours should magnify civilities that scarce deserve the name; I know not wherein they consisted, but in being glad to see one that was in any way related to you, and was himself a very ingenious man; either of those was a title to more than I did, or could show him. I am sorry I have not yet had an opportunity to wait on him in London; and I fear he should be gone before I am able to get thither. This long winter, and cold spring, has hung very heavy upon my lungs, and they are not yet in a case to be ventured in London air, which must be my excuse for not waiting upon him and Dr. Ashe yet.

The third edition of my essay has already, or will be speedily, in the press. But what perhaps will seem stranger, and possibly please you better, an abridgement is now making (if it be not already done) by one of the university of Oxford, for the use of young scholars, in the place of the ordinary system of logic. From the acquaintance I had of the temper of that place I did not expect to have it get much footing there. But so it is, I some time since received a very civil letter from one, wholly a stranger to me there, concerning such a design; and by another from him since, I conclude it near done. He seems to be an ingenious man, and he writes sensibly about it, but I can say nothing of it till I see it; and he, of his own accord, has offered that it shall be wholly submitted to my opinion, and disposal of it. And thus, sir, possibly that which you once proposed may be attained to, and I was pleased with the gentleman's design for your sake.

You are a strange man, you oblige me very much by the care you take to have it well translated, and you thank me for complying with your offer. In my last, as I remember, I told you the reason why it was so long before I writ, was an expectation of an answer from London, concerning something I had to communicate to you: it was in short this; I was willing to know what my bookseller would give for a good latin copy; he told me, at last, twenty pounds. His delay was, because he would first have known what the translator demanded. But I forced him to make his proposal, and so I send it to you, to make what use of it you please. He since writ me word, that a friend of his at Oxford would, in some time, be

at leisure to do it, and would undertake it. I bid him excuse himself to him, for that it was in hands I approved of, and some part of it now actually done. For I hope the essay (he was to show you the next week after you writ to me last) pleased you. Think it not a compliment, that I desire you to make what alterations you think fit. One thing particularly you will oblige me and the world in, and that is, in paring off some of the superfluous repetitions, which I left in for the sake of illiterate men, and the softer sex, not used to abstract notions and reasonings. But much of this reasoning will be out of doors in a latin translation. I refer all to your judgement, and so am secure it will be done as is best.

What I shall add concerning enthusiasm, I guess, will very much agree with your thoughts, since yours jump so right with mine, about the place where it is to come in, I having designed it for chap. 18, lib. iv, as a false principle of reasoning often made use of. But, to give an historical account of the various ravings men have embraced for religion, would, I fear, be besides my purpose, and be enough to make an huge volume.

My opinion of P. Malebranche agrees perfectly with yours. What I have writ concerning 'seeing all things in God', would make a little treatise of itself. But I have not quite gone through it, for fear I should by somebody or other be tempted to print it. For I love not controversies, and have a personal kindness for the author. When I have the happiness to see you, we will consider it together, and you shall dispose of it.

I think I shall make some other additions to be put into your latin translation, and particularly

concerning the 'connection of ideas', which has not, that I know, been hitherto considered, and has, I guess, a greater influence upon our minds than is usually taken notice of. Thus, you see, I make you the confident of my reveries; you would be troubled with a great many more of them, were you nearer.

TO DR. MOLYNEUX

True friendship

Oates, 27 *Oct.* 1698.

SIR,

Death has, with a violent hand, hastily snatched from you a dear brother. I doubt not but, on this occasion, you need all the consolation can be given to one unexpectedly bereft of so worthy and near a relation. Whatever inclination I may have to alleviate your sorrow, I bear too great a share in the loss, and am too sensibly touched with it myself, to be in a condition to discourse with you on this subject, or do any thing but mingle my tears with yours. I have lost, in your brother, not only an ingenious and learned acquaintance, all that the world esteemed; but an intimate and sincere friend, whom I truly loved, and by whom I was truly loved: and what a loss that is, those only can be sensible who know how valuable, and how scarce, a true friend is, and how far to be preferred to all other sorts of treasure. He has left a son, who I know was dear to him, and deserved to be so as much as was possible, for one of his age. I cannot think myself wholly incapacitated from paying some of the affection

and service that was due from me to my dear friend, as long as he has a child, or a brother, in the world. If, therefore, there be any thing, at this distance, wherein I, in my little sphere, may be able to serve your nephew or you, I beg you, by the memory of our deceased friend, to let me know it, that you may see that one who loved him so well, cannot but be tenderly concerned for his son, nor be otherwise than I am, Sir, etc.

SAMUEL PEPYS

1633–1703

To George, Lord Berkeley

An explanation

Derby House, 22 *Feb*. 1677–8

My Lord,

I am greatly owing to your Lordship for your last favour at St. John's, and did, till now, reckon myself under no less a debt to my Ladies for the honour at the same time done me, in their commands touching Mr. Bonithan. But, my Lord, I have lately had the misfortune of being undeceived in the latter, by coming to know the severity with which some of my Ladies are pleased to discourse of me in relation thereto. I assure your Lordship, I was so big with the satisfaction of having an opportunity given me by my Ladies at once of obliging them, paying a small respect to you, and doing a good office to a deserving gentleman, that I did not let one day pass before I had bespoke and obtained His Majesty's and Royal Highness's promise of favour in Mr. Bonithan's behalf: and was so far afterwards from failing him in my further assistances with Captain Trevanion and others, that I took early care to secure him a lieutenancy, by a commission actually signed for him by the King, in the ship *Stavereene*, relying upon the character Captain Trevanion had given me of his capacity to abide the examination,

established by the King, upon the promotion of lieutenants ; which was not only the most I should have done in the case of a brother, but more than ever I did in any man's case before, or, for his sake, do think I shall ever do again. True it is, my Lord, that when, upon his examination by the officers of the Navy, he was found not so fully qualified for the office of lieutenant as was requisite, I did with all respect, and to his seeming satisfaction, advise him to pass a little longer time in the condition he was then in, under a stricter application of himself to the practice of navigation. And, in pursuance of my duty to the King, I did acquaint him also with Mr. Bonithan's present unreadiness ; and had, therefore, a command given me for conferring the commission prepared for him upon another, who, upon examination, at the same time with Mr. Bonithan, was found better qualified for it. As to what I understand my Ladies are pleased to entertain themselves and others with, to my reproach, as if money had been wanting in the case, it is a reproach lost upon me, my Lord, who am known to be so far from needing any purgation in the point of selling places, as never to have taken so much as my fee for a commission or warrant to any one officer in the Navy, within the whole time, now near twenty years, that I have had the honour of serving His Majesty therein—a self-denial at this day so little in fashion, and yet so chargeable to maintain, that I take no pride, and as little pleasure, in the mentioning it, further than it happily falls in here to my defence against the mistake the Ladies seem disposed to arraign me by on this occasion. Besides that, in the particular case of this gentleman, Lieut. Beele,

who enjoys the commission designed for Mr. Bonithan, he is one whose face I never saw either before or since the time of his receiving it, nor know one friend he has in the world to whom he owes this benefit, other than the King's justice and his own modest merit : which, having said, it remains only that I assure your Lordship what I have so said, is not calculated with any regard to, much less any repining at, the usage the Ladies are pleased to show me in this affair, for 't is fit I bear it, but to acquit myself to your Lordship in my demeanour towards them, as becomes their and, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient Servant.

To Mrs. Steward

A wedding in the city

20 *Sept.* 1695.

Madam,

You are very good, and pray continue so, by as many kind messages as you can, and notices of your health, such as the bearer brings you back my thanks for, and a thousand services. Here's a sad town, and God knows when it will be a better, our losses at sea making a very melancholy exchange at both ends of it ; the gentlewomen of this, to say nothing of the other, sitting with their arms across, without a yard of muslin in their shops to sell, while the ladies, they tell me, walk pensively by, without a shilling, I mean a good one, in their pockets to buy. One thing there is indeed, that comes in my way as a Governor, to hear of, which carries a little mirth with it, and indeed is very odd. Two wealthy citizens that are

lately dead, and left their estates, one to a Blue Coat boy, and the other to a Blue Coat girl, in Christ's Hospital. The extraordinariness of which has led some of the magistrates to carry it on to a match, which is ended in a public wedding; he in his habit of blue satin, led by two of the girls, and she in blue, with an apron green and petticoat yellow, all of sarsnet, led by two of the boys of the house, through Cheapside to Guildhall Chapel, where they were married by the Dean of St. Paul's, she given by my Lord Mayor. The wedding dinner, it seems, was kept in the Hospital Hall, but the great day will be tomorrow, St Matthew's; when, so much I am sure of, my Lord Mayor will be there, and myself also have had a ticket of invitation thither, and if I can, will be there too, but, for other particulars, I must refer you to my next, and so,

Dear madam, Adieu.

Bow Bells are just now ringing, ding dong, but whether for this, I cannot presently tell; but it is likely enough, for I have known them ring upon much foolisher occasions, and lately too.

To John Evelyn

Reply to an old friend

Clapham, 7 *Aug.* 1700.

I HAVE no herds to mind, nor will my Doctor allow me any books here. What then, will you say, too, are you doing? Why, truly, nothing that will bear naming, and yet I am not, I think, idle; for who can, that has so much of past and

to come to think on, as I have? And thinking, I take it, is working, though many forms beneath what my Lady and you are doing. But pray remember what o'clock it is with you and me; and be not now, by overstirring, too bold with your present complaint, any more than I dare be with mine, which, too, has been no less kind in giving me my warning, than the other to you, and to neither of us, I hope, and, through God's mercy, dare say, either unlooked for or unwelcome. I wish, nevertheless, that I were able to administer any thing towards the lengthening that precious rest of life which God has thus long blessed you, and, in you, mankind, with; but I have always been too little regardful of my own health, to be a prescriber to others. I cannot give myself the scope I otherwise should in talking now to you at this distance, on account of the care extraordinary I am now under from Mrs. Skinner's being suddenly fallen very ill; but ere long I may possibly venture at entertaining you with something from my young man in exchange—I don't say in payment, for the pleasure you gratify me with from yours, whom I pray God to bless with continuing but what he is! and I'll ask no more for him.

JONATHAN SWIFT

1667–1745

To Stella

The Dean at home

London, 16 *Jan.* 1710–11.

O faith, young women, I have sent my letter N. 13, without one crumb of an answer to any of MD's; there is for you now; and yet Presto ben't angry faith, not a bit, only he will begin to be in pain next Irish post, except he sees MD's little handwriting in the glass frame at the bar of St. James's Coffee-house, where Presto would never go but for that purpose. Presto's at home, God help him, every night from six till bed time, and has as little enjoyment or pleasure in life at present as anybody in the world, although in full favour with all the ministry. As hope saved, nothing gives Presto any sort of dream of happiness, but a letter now and then from his own dearest MD. I love the expectation of it, and when it does not come, I comfort myself, that I have it yet to be happy with. Yes faith, and when I write to MD, I am happy too; it is just as if methinks you were here, and I prating to you, and telling you where I have been: Well, says you, Presto, come, where have you been to-day? come, let's hear now. And so then I answer; Ford and I were visiting Mr. Lewis, and Mr. Prior, and Prior has given me a fine Plautus, and then Ford would

have had me dine at his lodgings, and so I would not; and so I dined with him at an eating-house; which I have not done five times since I came here; and so I came home, after visiting Sir Andrew Fountaine's mother and sister, and Sir Andrew Fountaine is mending, though slowly.

17. I was making, this morning, some general visits, and at twelve I called at the coffee-house for a letter from MD; so the man said he had given it to Patrick; then I went to the Court of requests and treasury to find Mr. Harley, and after some time spent in mutual reproaches, I promised to dine with him; I stayed there till seven, then called at Sterne's and Leigh's to talk about your box, and to have it sent by Smyth; Sterne says he has been making inquiries, and will set things right as soon as possible. I suppose it lies at Chester, at least I hope so, and only wants a lift over to you. . . . Well, so I came home to read my letter from Stella, but the dog Patrick was abroad; at last he came, and I got my letter; I found another hand had superscribed it; when I opened it, I found it written all in French, and subscribed Bernage: faith, I was ready to fling it at Patrick's head. Bernage tells me, he had been to desire your recommendation to me to make him a captain; and your cautious answer, 'That he had as much power with me as you,' was a notable one; if you were here, I would present you to the ministry as a person of ability. Bernage should let me know where to write to him; this is the second letter I have had without any direction; however, I beg I may not have a third, but that you will ask him, and send me how I shall direct to him. In the meantime, tell

him, that if regiments are to be raised here, as he says, I will speak to George Granville, secretary at war, to make him a captain; and use what other interest I conveniently can. I think that is enough, and so tell him, and do not trouble me with his letters when I expect them from MD; do you hear, young women, write to Presto.

18. I was this morning with Mr. Secretary St. John, and we were to dine at Mr. Harley's alone, about some business of importance; but there were two or three gentlemen there. Mr. Secretary and I went together from his office to Mr. Harley's, and thought to have been very wise; but the deuce a bit: the company stayed, and more came, and Harley went away at seven, and the secretary and I stayed with the rest of the company till eleven; I would then have had him come away, but he was in for it; and though he swore he would come away at that flask, there I left him. I wonder at the civility of these people; when he saw I would drink no more, he would always pass the bottle by me, and yet I could not keep the toad from drinking himself, nor he would not let me go neither, nor Masham, who was with us. When I got home, I found a parcel directed to me, and opening it, I found a pamphlet written entirely against myself, not by name, but against something I writ: it is pretty civil, and affects to be so, and I think I will take no notice of it; it is against something written very lately; and indeed I know not what to say, nor do I care; and so you are a saucy rogue for losing your money to-day at Stoyte's; to let that bungler beat you, fy Stella, are not you ashamed? well, I forgive you this once, never do so again; no, noooo.

Kiss and be friends, sirrah.—Come, let me go sleep, I go earlier to bed than formerly; and have not been out so late these two months; but the secretary was in a drinking humour. So good night, myownlittledearsaucyinsolentrogues.

19. Then you read that long word in the last line, no faith have not you. Well, when will this letter come from our MD? to-morrow or next day without fail; yes faith, and so it is coming. This was an insipid snowy day, and I dined gravely with Mrs. Vanhomrigh, and came home, and am now got to bed a little after ten; I remember old Culpepper's maxim:

> Would you have a settled head,
> You must early go to bed:
> I tell you, and I tell it again,
> You must be in bed at ten.

20. And so I went to-day with my new wig, o hoao, to visit Lady Worsley, whom I had not seen before, although she was near a month in town. Then I walked in the Park to find Mr. Ford, whom I had promised to meet, and coming down the Mall, who should come towards me but Patrick, and gives me five letters out of his pocket. I read the superscription of the first, Pshoh, said I; of the second, pshoh again; of the third, pshah, pshah, pshah; of the fourth, a gad, a gad, a gad, I am in a rage; of the fifth and last, O hoooa; ay marry this is something, this is our MD, so truly we opened it, I think immediately, and it began the most impudently in the world, thus; Dear Presto, we are even thus far. Now we are even, quoth Stephen, when he gave his wife six blows for one. I received your ninth four days after I had sent my thirteenth. But

I'll reckon with you anon about that, young women. Why did not you recant at the end of your letter when you got your eleventh? tell me that, huzzies base, were we even then, were we, sirrah? but I will not answer your letter now, I will keep it for another time. We had a great deal of snow to-day, and it is terrible cold. . . .

21. *Morning.* It has snowed terribly all night, and is vengeance cold. I am not yet up, but cannot write long; my hands will freeze. Is there a good fire, Patrick? Yes, sir, then I will rise; come take away the candle. You must know I write on the dark side of my bedchamber, and am forced to have a candle till I rise, for the bed stands between me and the window, and I keep the curtains shut this cold weather. So pray let me rise, and, Patrick, here, take away the candle.—*At night.* We are now here in high frost and snow, the largest fire can hardly keep us warm. It is very ugly walking, a baker's boy broke his thigh yesterday. I walk slow, make short steps, and never tread on my heel. It is a good proverb the Devonshire people have:

Walk fast in snow,
In frost walk slow,
And still as you go,
Tread on your toe:
When frost and snow are both together,
Sit by the fire and spare shoe leather.

22. *Morning.* Starving, starving, uth, uth, uth, uth, uth.—Do not you remember I used to come into your chamber, and turn Stella out of her chair, and rake up the fire in a cold morning, and cry uth, uth, uth? O faith, I must rise, my hand is so cold I can write no more. . . .

26, 27, 28, 29, 30. I have been so lazy and negligent these last four days, that I could not write to MD. My head is not in order, and yet it is not absolutely ill, but giddyish, and makes me listless; I walk every day, and hope I shall grow better. I wish I were with MD; I long for spring and good weather, and then I will come over. My riding in Ireland keeps me well. I am very temperate, and eat of the easiest meats as I am directed, and hope the malignity will go off; but one fit shakes me a long time. I dined to-day with Lord Mountjoy, yesterday at Mr. Stone's in the city, on Sunday at Vanhomrigh's, Saturday with Ford, and Friday I think at Vanhomrigh's, and that's all the journal I can send MD; for I was so lazy while I was well that I could not write. I thought to have sent this to-night, but it is ten, and I'll go to bed, and write on the other side to Parsivol to-morrow, and send it on Thursday; and so good night my dears, and love Presto, and be healthy, and Presto will be so too.

To Lord Treasurer Oxford

The Dean makes his bow

1 *July*, 1714.

My Lord,

When I was with you, I have said more than once, that I would never allow quality or station made any real difference between men. Being now absent and forgotten, I have changed my mind: you have a thousand people who can pretend they love you, with as much appearance of sincerity as I, so that, according to common

justice, I can have but a thousandth part in return of what I give. And this difference is wholly owing to your station. And the misfortune is still the greater, because I always loved you just so much the worse for your station: for, in your public capacity, you have often angered me to the heart, but, as a private man, never once. So that, if I only look toward myself, I could wish you a private man to-morrow: for I have nothing to ask; at least nothing that you will give, which is the same thing: and then you would see whether I should not with much more willingness attend you in a retirement, whenever you please to give me leave, than ever I did at London or Windsor. From these sentiments I will never write to you, if I can help it, otherwise than as to a private person, or allow myself to have been obliged to you in any other capacity.

The memory of one great instance of your candour and justice, I will carry to my grave; that having been in a manner domestic with you for almost four years, it was never in the power of any public or concealed enemy to make you think ill of me, though malice and envy were often employed to that end. If I live, posterity shall know that, and more; which, though you, and somebody that shall be nameless, seem to value less than I could wish, is all the return I can make you. Will you give me leave to say how I would desire to stand in your memory? As one, who was truly sensible of the honour you did him, though he was too proud to be vain upon it; as one, who was neither assuming, officious, nor teasing; who never wilfully misrepresented persons or facts to you, nor consulted his passions when he gave a

character; and lastly, as one, whose indiscretions proceeded altogether from a weak head, and not an ill heart. I will add one thing more, which is the highest compliment I can make, that I never was afraid of offending you, nor am now in any pain for the manner I write to you in. I have said enough; and, like one at your levee, having made my bow, I shrink back into the crowd.

To Dr. Sheridan

News from the country

25 *Jan.* 1724-5.

I have a packet of letters, which I intended to send by Molly, who has been stopped three days by the bad weather; but now I will send them by the post to-morrow to Kells, and enclosed to Mr. Tickell there is one to you, and one to James Stopford.

I can do no work this terrible weather; which has put us all seventy times out of patience. I have been deaf nine days, and am now pretty well recovered again.

Pray desire Mr. Stanton and Worral to continue giving themselves some trouble with Mr. Pratt; but let it succeed or not, I hope I shall be easy.

Mrs. Johnson swears it will rain till Michaelmas. She is so pleased with her pick-axe, that she wears it fastened to her girdle on her left side, in balance with her watch. The lake is strangely overflown, and we are desperate about turf, being forced to buy it three miles off: and Mrs. Johnson (God help her!) gives you many a curse. Your mason is come, but cannot yet work upon your garden. Neither can I agree with him about the great wall.

For the rest, *vide* the letter you will have on Monday, if Mr. Tickell uses you well.

The news of this country is, that the maid you sent down, John Farelly's sister, is married; but the portion and settlement are yet a secret. The cows here never give milk on midsummer eve.

You would wonder what carking and caring there is among us for small beer and lean mutton, and starved lamb, and stopping gaps, and driving cattle from the corn. In that we are all-to-be-Dingleyed.

The ladies' room smokes; the rain drops from the skies into the kitchen; our servants eat and drink like the devil, and pray for rain, which entertains them at cards and sleep; which are much lighter than spades, sledges, and crows. Their maxim is,

Eat like a Turk,
  Sleep like a dormouse;
Be last at work,
  At victuals foremost.

Which is all at present; hoping you and your good family are well, as we are all at this present writing &c.

Robin has just carried out a load of bread and cold meat for breakfast; this is their way; but now a cloud hangs over them, for fear it should hold up, and the clouds blow off.

I write on till Molly comes in for the letter. O, what a draggletail will she be before she gets to Dublin! I wish she may not happen to fall upon her back by the way.

I affirm against Aristotle, that cold and rain congregate homogenes, for they gather together you and your crew, at whist, punch, and claret. Happy weather for Mrs. Maul, Betty, and Stopford, and all true lovers of cards and laziness.

THE BLESSINGS OF A COUNTRY LIFE.

Far from our debtors,
No Dublin letters,
Not seen by our betters.

THE PLAGUES OF A COUNTRY LIFE.

A companion with news,
A great want of shoes;
Eat lean meat, or choose;
A church without pews.
Our horses astray,
No straw, oats, or hay;
December in May,
Our boys run away,
All servants at play.

Molly sends for the letter.

TO ALEXANDER POPE

Mostly about Gulliver

Dublin, 17 *Nov.* 1726.

I AM just come from answering a letter of Mrs. Howard's, writ in such mystical terms, that I should never have found out the meaning, if a book had not been sent me called *Gulliver's Travels*, of which you say so much in yours. I read the book over, and in the second volume observed several passages which appear to be patched and altered, and the style of a different sort, unless I am mistaken. Dr. Arbuthnot likes the projectors least; others, you tell me, the flying island; some think

it wrong to be so hard upon whole bodies or corporations, yet the general opinion is, that reflections on particular persons are most to be blamed; so that in these cases, I think the best method is to let censure and opinion take their course. A bishop here said, that book was full of improbable lies, and for his part, he hardly believed a word of it; and so much for Gulliver.

Going to England is a very good thing, if it were not attended with an ugly circumstance of returning to Ireland. It is a shame you do not persuade your ministers to keep me on that side, if it were but by a court expedient of keeping me in prison for a plotter; but at the same time I must tell you, that such journeys very much shorten my life, for a month here is very much longer than six at Twickenham.

How comes friend Gay to be so tedious? Another man can publish fifty thousand lies sooner than he can publish fifty fables. . . . Let me add, that if I were Gulliver's friend, I would desire all my acquaintance to give out that his copy was basely mangled and abused, and added to, and blotted out by the printer; for so to me it seems in the second volume particularly.

Adieu.

To John Gay

Enquiries into Mr. Gay's pursuits

Dublin, 4 *May*, 1732.

I am now as lame as when you writ your letter, and almost as lame as your letter itself, for want of that limb from my lady duchess, which you

promised, and without which I wonder how it could limp hither. I am not in a condition to make a true step even on Amesbury Downs, and I declare that a corporeal false step is worse than a political one: nay, worse than a thousand political ones, for which I appeal to courts and ministers, who hobble on and prosper without the sense of feeling. To talk of riding and walking is insulting me, for I can as soon fly as do either. It is your pride or laziness, more than chair-hire, that makes the town expensive. No honour is lost by walking in the dark; and in the day you may beckon a blackguard boy under a gate, near your visiting place, (experto crede,) save elevenpence, and get half-a-crown's worth of health. The worst of my present misfortune is, that I eat and drink, and can digest neither for want of exercise; and, to increase my misery, the knaves are sure to find me at home, and make huge void spaces in my cellars. I congratulate with you for losing your great acquaintance; in such a case, philosophy teaches that we must submit, and be content with good ones. I like Lord Cornbury's refusing his pension, but I demur at his being elected for Oxford; which, I conceive, is wholly changed; and entirely devoted to new principles; so it appeared to me the two last times I was there. I find by the whole cast of your letter, that you are as giddy and as volatile as ever: just the reverse of Mr. Pope, who has always loved a domestic life from his youth. I was going to wish you had some little place that you could call your own, but, I profess I do not know you well enough to contrive any one system of life that would please you. You pretend to preach up riding and walking to the

duchess, yet from my knowledge of you after twenty years, you always joined a violent desire of perpetually shifting places and company, with a rooted laziness, and an utter impatience of fatigue. A coach and six horses is the utmost exercise you can bear; and this only when you can fill it with such company as is best suited to your taste, and how glad would you be if it could waft you in the air to avoid jolting; while I, who am so much later in life, can, or at least could, ride five hundred miles on a trotting horse. You mortally hate writing, only because it is the thing you chiefly ought to do; as well to keep up the vogue you have in the world, as to make you easy in your fortune. You are merciful to everything but money, your best friend, whom you treat with inhumanity. Be assured I will hire people to watch all your motions, and to return me a faithful account. Tell me, have you cured your absence of mind? can you attend to trifles? can you at Amesbury write domestic libels to divert the family and neighbouring squires for five miles round? or venture so far on horseback, without apprehending a stumble at every step? can you set the footmen a-laughing as they wait at dinner? and do the duchess's women admire your wit? in what esteem are you with the vicar of the parish? can you play with him at backgammon? have the farmers found out that you cannot distinguish rye from barley, or an oak from a crab-tree? You are sensible that I know the full extent of your country skill is in fishing for roaches or gudgeons at the highest.

I love to do you good offices with your friends, and therefore desire you will show this letter to the

duchess, to improve her grace's good opinion of your qualifications, and convince her how useful you are likely to be in the family. Her grace shall have the honour of my correspondence again when she goes to Amesbury. Hear a piece of Irish news ; I buried the famous General Meredyth's father last night in my cathedral, he was ninety-six years old ; so that Mrs. Pope may live seven years longer. You saw Mr. Pope in health, pray is he generally more healthy than when I was among you ? I would know how your own health is, and how much wine you drink in a day ? My stint in company is a pint at noon, and half as much at night ; but I often dine at home like a hermit, and then I drink little or none at all. Yet I differ from you, for I would have society, if I could get what I like, people of middle understanding, and middle rank.

Adieu.

JOSEPH ADDISON

1672–1719

To Alexander Pope

Translation of Homer

26 *Oct.* 1713.

I was extremely glad to receive a letter from you, but more so upon reading the contents of it. The work you mention will, I dare say, very sufficiently recommend itself when your name appears with the proposals: and if you think I can any way contribute to the forwarding of them, you cannot lay a greater obligation upon me, than by employing me in such an office. As I have an ambition of having it known that you are my friend, I shall be very proud of showing it by this or any other instance. I question not but your translation will enrich our tongue, and do honour to our country; for I conclude of it already from those performances with which you have obliged the public. I would only have you consider how it may most turn to your advantage. Excuse my impertinence in this particular, which proceeds from my zeal for your ease and happiness. The work would cost you a great deal of time, and, unless you undertake it, will, I am afraid, never be executed by any other; at least I know none of this age that is equal to it besides yourself.

I am at present wholly immersed in country business, and begin to take a delight in it. I wish

I might hope to see you here some time, and will not despair of it, when you engage in a work that will require solitude and retirement.

To Mr. Secretary Craggs

A bequest

June 1719.

Dear Sir,

I cannot wish that any of my writings should last longer than the memory of our friendship, and therefore I thus publicly bequeath them to you, in return for the many valuable instances of your affection.

That they may come to you with as little disadvantage as possible, I have left the care of them to one, whom, by the experience of some years, I know well-qualified to answer my intentions. He has already the honour and happiness of being under your protection; and as he will very much stand in need of it, I cannot wish him better than that he may continue to deserve the favour and countenance of such a patron.

I have no time to lay out in forming such compliments as would but ill suit that familiarity between us which was once my greatest pleasure, and will be my greatest honour hereafter. Instead of them, accept of my hearty wishes that the great reputation you have acquired so early, may increase more and more, and that you may long serve your country with those excellent talents and unblemished integrity, which have so powerfully recommended you to the most gracious and amiable monarch that ever filled a throne. May

the frankness and generosity of your spirit continue to soften and subdue your enemies, and gain you many friends, if possible, as sincere as yourself. When you have found such, they cannot wish you more true happiness than I, who am with the greatest zeal, dear sir,

Your most entirely affectionate friend
and faithful obedient servant.

SIR RICHARD STEELE

1672–1729

To Mary Scurlock

An explicit declaration

11 *Aug.* 1707.

Madam,—I writ you on Saturday, by Mrs. Warren, and give you this trouble to urge the same request I made then; which was, that I may be admitted to wait upon you. I should be very far from desiring this if it were a transgression of the most severe rules to allow it. I know you are very much above the little arts which are frequent in your sex, of giving unnecessary torment to their admirers; I therefore hope you will do so much justice to the generous passion I have for you, as to let me have an opportunity of acquainting you upon what motives I pretend to your good opinion. I shall not trouble you with my sentiments till I know how they will be received; and as I know no reason why the difference of sex should make our language to each other differ from the ordinary rules of right reason, I shall affect plainness and sincerity in my discourse to you, as much as other lovers do perplexity and rapture. Instead of saying 'I shall die for you', I profess I should be glad to lead my life with you. You are as beautiful, as witty, as prudent, and as good-humoured as any woman breathing; but, I must confess to you, I regard all these excellences as you will please to

direct them for my happiness or misery. With me, madam, the only lasting motive to love, is the hope of its becoming mutual. I beg of you to let Mrs. Warren send me word when I may attend you. I promise you, I will talk of nothing but indifferent things; though, at the same time, I know not how I shall approach you in the tender moment of first seeing you after this declaration which has been made by, madam,

Your most obedient and most faithful
humble servant.

To the same

A pleasing transport

Smith Street, Westminster, 1707.

Madam,—I lay down last night with your image in my thoughts, and have awakened this morning in the same contemplation. The pleasing transport with which I am delighted has a sweetness in it attended with a train of ten thousand soft desires, anxieties, and cares. The day arises on my hopes with new brightness; youth, beauty, and innocence are the charming objects that steal me from myself, and give me joys above the reach of ambition, pride, or glory. Believe me, fair one, to throw myself at your feet is giving myself the highest bliss I know on earth. Oh, hasten, ye minutes! bring on the happy morning wherein to be ever hers will make me look down on thrones! Dear Molly, I am tenderly, passionately, faithfully thine.

To the same

A lover betrays himself

St. James's Coffee House, 1 *Sept.* 1707

Madam,—It is the hardest thing in the world to be in love, and yet to attend to business. As for me, all who speak to me find me out, and I must lock myself up, or other people will do it for me.

A gentleman asked me this morning, 'What news from Lisbon?' and I answered, 'She's exquisitely handsome.' Another desired to know when I had been last at Hampton Court. I replied, 'It will be on Tuesday come se'nnight.' Pr'ythee allow me at least to kiss your hand before that day, that my mind may be in some composure. O love!

A thousand torments dwell about thee!
Yet who would live to live without thee?

Methinks I could write a volume to you; but all the language on earth would fail in saying how much, and with what disinterested passion, I am ever yours.

To his wife

He proposes an outing

Lord Sunderland's Office, 19 May, 1708.
Eleven o'clock.

Dear Prue,—I desire you to get the coach and yourself ready as soon as you can conveniently, and call for me here, from whence we will go and spend some time together in the fresh air in free conference. Let my best periwig be put in the

coach-box, and my new shoes, for it is a great comfort to be well dressed in agreeable company. You are vital life to your obliged, affectionate husband, and humble servant.

To the same

His greatest affliction

12 *Aug.* 1708.

Madam,—I have your letter, wherein you let me know that the little dispute we have had is far from being a trouble to you; nevertheless I assure you, any disturbance between us is the greatest affliction to me imaginable. You talk of the judgement of the world; I shall never govern my actions by it, but by the rules of morality and right reason. I love you better than the light of my eyes or the life-blood in my heart; but you are also to understand that neither my sight shall be so far enchanted, nor my affection so much master of me, as to make me forget our common interest. To attend my business as I ought, and improve my fortune, it is necessary that my time and my will should be under no direction but my own. . . . I write all this rather to explain my own thoughts to you, than to answer your letter distinctly. I enclose it to you, that upon second thoughts, you may see the disrespectful manner in which you treat

Your affectionate, faithful husband.

To THE SAME

Four characteristic notes

I

From the Press, one in the morning, 30 *Sept.* 1710.

DEAR PRUE,—I am very sleepy and tired, but could not think of closing my eyes till I had told you I am, dearest creature,

Your most affectionate and faithful husband.

II

Bloomsbury Square, 24 *Dec.* 1713.

DEAR PRUE,—I dine with Lord Halifax and shall be at home half hour after six. For thee I die, for thee I languish.

III

16 *Feb.* 1716-17.

DEAR PRUE,—Sober or not, I am ever yours.

IV

Thursday, 3 in the afternoon, 2 *May,* 1717.

I had a very painful night last night; but, after a little chocolate an hour or two ago, and a chicken for dinner, am much more at ease.

To THE SAME

The natural slave of beauty.

20 *June,* 1717.

DEAR PRUE,—I have yours of the 14th, and am infinitely obliged to you for the length of it. I do not know another whom I could commend for that

circumstance; but where we entirely love, the continuance of anything they do to please us is a pleasure. As for your relations, once for all, pray take it for granted, that my regard and conduct towards all and singular of them shall be as you direct.

I hope, by the grace of God, to continue what you wish me, every way, an honest man. My wife and my children are the objects that have wholly taken up my heart; and as I am not invited or encouraged in anything which regards the public, I am easy under that neglect or envy of my past actions, and cheerfully contract that diffusive spirit within the interests of my own family. You are the head of us; and I stoop to a female reign as being naturally made the slave of beauty. But to prepare for our manner of living when we are again together, give me leave to say, while I am here at leisure, and come to lie at Chelsea, what I think may contribute to our better way of living. I very much approve Mrs. Evans and her husband; and if you take my advice, I would have them a being in our house, and Mrs. Clark the care and inspection of the nursery. I would have you entirely at leisure to pass your time with me in diversions, in books, in entertainments, and no manner of business intrude upon us but at stated times. For, though you are made to be the delight of my eyes, and food of all my senses and faculties, yet a turn of care and housewifery, and I know not what prepossession against conversation-pleasures, robs me of the witty and the handsome woman to a degree not to be expressed. I will work my brains and fingers to procure us plenty of all things, and

demand nothing of you but to take delight in agreeable dresses, cheerful discourses, and gay sights, attended by me. This may be done by putting the kitchen and the nursery in the hands I propose ; and I shall have nothing to do but to pass as much time at home as I possibly can, in the best company in the world. We cannot tell here what to think of the trial of my Lord Oxford ; if the ministry are in earnest in that, and I should see it will be extended to a length of time, I will leave them to themselves, and wait upon you. Miss Moll grows a mighty beauty, and she shall be very prettily dressed, as likewise shall Betty and Eugene : and if I throw away a little money in adorning my brats, I hope you will forgive me : they are, I thank God, all very well ; and the charming form of their mother has tempered the likeness they bear to their rough sire, who is, with the greatest fondness,

Your most obliged and obedient husband.

JOHN GAY

1685–1732

To Jonathan Swift

Concerning Gulliver

17 *Nov.* 1726.

About ten days ago a book was published here of the travels of one Gulliver, which has been the conversation of the whole town ever since: the whole impression sold in a week: and nothing is more diverting than to hear the different opinions people give of it, though all agree in liking it extremely. It is generally said that you are the author; but I am told the bookseller declares, he knows not from what hand it came. From the highest to the lowest it is universally read, from the cabinet-council to the nursery. The politicians to a man agree, that it is free from particular reflections, but that the satire on general societies of men is too severe. Not but we now and then meet with people of greater perspicuity, who are in search for particular applications in every leaf; and it is highly probable we shall have keys published to give light into Gulliver's design. Lord —— is the person who least approves it, blaming it as a design of evil consequence to depreciate human nature, at which it cannot be wondered that he takes most offence, being himself the most accomplished of his species, and so losing more than any other of that praise which is due both to the dignity and virtue of a man. Your friend, my Lord Harcourt, commends it very much, though he thinks in some places the matter

too far carried. The Duchess Dowager of Marlborough is in raptures at it; she says she can dream of nothing else since she read it: she declares that she has now found out that her whole life has been lost in caressing the worst part of mankind, and treating the best as her foes: and that if she knew Gulliver, though he had been the worst enemy she ever had, she should give up her present acquaintance for his friendship. You may see by this, that you are not much injured by being supposed the author of this piece. If you are, you have disobliged us, and two or three of your best friends, in not giving us the least hint of it while you were with us; and in particular Dr. Arbuthnot, who says it is ten thousand pities he had not known it, he could have added such abundance of things upon every subject. Among lady critics, some have found out that Mr. Gulliver had a particular malice to maids of honour. Those of them who frequent the church, say his design is impious, and that it is depreciating the works of the Creator.

Notwithstanding, I am told the princess has read it with great pleasure. As to other critics, they think the flying island is the least entertaining; and so great an opinion the town have of the impossibility of Gulliver's writing at all below himself, it is agreed that part was not writ by the same hand, though this has its defenders too. It has passed lords and commons, *nemine contradicente*; and the whole town, men, women, and children, are quite full of it.

Perhaps I may all this time be talking to you of a book you have never seen, and which has not yet reached Ireland; if it has not, I believe what we have said will be sufficient to recommend

it to your reading, and that you will order me to send it to you.

But it will be much better to come over yourself, and read it here, where you will have the pleasure of variety of commentators, to explain the difficult passages to you.

We all rejoice that you have fixed the precise time of your coming to be *cum hirundine prima*; which we modern naturalists pronounce, ought to be reckoned, contrary to Pliny, in this northern latitude of fifty-two degrees, from the end of February, Styl. Greg., at furthest. But to us, your friends, the coming of such a black swallow as you will make a summer in the worst of seasons. We are no less glad at your mention of Twickenham and Dawley; and in town you know, you have a lodging at court.

The princess is clothed in Irish silk; pray give our service to the weavers. We are strangely surprised to hear that the bells in Ireland ring without your money. I hope you do not write the thing that is not. We are afraid that B—— hath been guilty of that crime, that you (like a houyhnhnm) have treated him as a yahoo, and discarded him your service. I fear you do not understand these modish terms, which every creature now understands but yourself.

You tell us your wine is bad, and that the clergy do not frequent your house, which we look upon to be tautology. The best advice we can give you is, to make them a present of your wine, and come away to better.

You fancy we envy you, but you are mistaken; we envy those you are with, for we cannot envy the man we love. Adieu.

ALEXANDER POPE

1688–1744

To William Wycherley

Dryden and his critics

Binfield in Windsor Forest, 26 *Dec* 1704.

It was certainly a great satisfaction to me to see and converse with a man, whom in his writings I had so long known with pleasure; but it was a high addition to it, to hear you, at our very first meeting, doing justice to your dead friend Mr. Dryden. I was not so happy as to know him: *Virgilium tantum vidi.* Had I been born early enough I must have known and loved him: for I have been assured, not only by yourself, but by Mr. Congreve and Sir William Trumbul, that his personal qualities were as amiable as his poetical, notwithstanding the many libellous misrepresentations of them, against which the former of these gentlemen has told me he will one day vindicate him. I suppose those injuries were begun by the violence of party, but it is no doubt they were continued by envy at his success and fame. And those scribblers who attacked him in his latter times, were only like gnats in a summer's evening, which are never very troublesome but in the finest and most glorious season; for his fire, like the sun's, shined clearest towards its setting.

You must not therefore imagine, that when you

told me my own performances were above those critics, I was so vain as to believe it; and yet I may not be so humble as to think myself quite below their notice. For critics, as they are birds of prey, have ever a natural inclination to carrion: and though such poor writers as I are but beggars, no beggar is so poor but he can keep a cur, and no author is so beggarly but he can keep a critic. I am far from thinking the attacks of such people any honour or dishonour even to me, much less to Mr. Dryden. I agree with you that whatever lesser wits have arisen since his death are but like stars appearing when the sun is set, that twinkle only in his absence, and with the rays they have borrowed from him. Our wit (as you call it) is but reflection or imitation, therefore scarce to be called ours. True wit, I believe, may be defined a justness of thought, and a facility of expression. . . . However, this is far from a complete definition; pray help me to a better, as I doubt not you can.

To Joseph Addison

A few thoughts from a rambling head

14 *Dec.* 1713.

I HAVE been lying in wait for my own imagination, this week and more, and watching what thoughts came up in the whirl of the fancy, that were worth communicating to you in a letter. But I am at length convinced that my rambling head can produce nothing of that sort; so I must e'en be content with telling you the old story, that I love you heartily. I have often found by

experience, that nature and truth, though never so low or vulgar, are yet pleasing when openly and artlessly represented : it would be diverting to me to read the very letters of an infant, could it write its innocent inconsistencies and tautologies just as it thought them. This makes me hope a letter from me will not be unwelcome to you, when I am conscious I write with more unreservedness than ever man wrote, or perhaps talked, to another. I trust your good nature with the whole range of my follies, and really love you so well, that I would rather you should pardon me than esteem me ; since one is an act of goodness and benevolence, the other a kind of constrained deference.

You cannot wonder my thoughts are scarce consistent, when I tell you how they are distracted. Every hour of my life my mind is strangely divided ; this minute perhaps I am above the stars, with a thousand systems round about me, looking forward into a vast abyss, and losing my whole comprehension in the boundless space of creation, in dialogues with Whiston and the astronomers ; the next moment I am below all trifles, grovelling with T—— in the very centre of nonsense : now I am recreated with the brisk sallies and quick turns of wit, which Mr. Steele, in his liveliest and freest humours, darts about him ; and now levelling my application to the insignificant observations and quirks of grammar of C—— and D——.

Good God ! what an incongruous animal is man ! how unsettled in his best part, his soul ; and how changing and variable in his frame of body ! the constancy of the one shook by every notion, the

temperament of the other affected by every blast of wind! What is he, altogether, but a mighty inconsistency; sickness and pain is the lot of one half of him, doubt and fear the portion of the other! What a bustle we make about passing our time when all our space is but a point! what aims and ambitions are crowded into this little instant of our life, which (as Shakespeare finely worded it) is rounded with a sleep! Our whole extent of being is no more, in the eye of Him who gave it, than a scarce perceptible moment of duration. Those animals whose circle of living is limited to three or four hours, as the naturalists tell us, are yet as long-lived, and possess as wide a field of action as man, if we consider him with a view to all space and all eternity. Who knows what plots, what achievements a mite may perform in his kingdom of a grain of dust, within his life of some minutes; and of how much less consideration than even this, is the life of man in the sight of God, who is for ever and ever?

Who that thinks in this train, but must see the world, and its contemptible grandeurs, lessen before him at every thought? It is enough to make one remain stupefied in a poise of inaction, void of all desires, of all designs, of all friendships.

But we must return (through our very condition of being) to our narrow selves, and those things that affect ourselves: our passions, our interests flow in upon us and unphilosophize us into mere mortals. For my part, I never return so much into myself, as when I think of you, whose friendship is one of the best comforts I have for the insignificancy of myself.

To Jonathan Swift

Friends to posterity

23 *March*, 1727-8.

I SEND you a very odd thing, a paper printed in Boston, in New England, wherein you will find a real person, a member of their parliament, of the name of Jonathan Gulliver. If the fame of that traveller has travelled thither, it has travelled very quick, to have folks christened already by the name of the supposed author. But if you object that no child so lately christened could be arrived at years of maturity to be elected into parliament, I reply (to solve the riddle) that the person is an Anabaptist, and not christened till full age, which sets all right. However it be, the accident is very singular that these two names should be united.

Mr. Gay's opera has been acted near forty days running, and will certainly continue the whole season. So he has more than a fence about his thousand pounds; he will soon be thinking of a fence about his two thousand. Shall no one of us live as we would wish each other to live? Shall he have no annuity, you no settlement on this side, and I no prospect of getting to you on the other? This world is made for Caesar,—as Cato said, for ambitious, false, or flattering people to domineer in; nay, they would not, by their good will, leave us our very books, thoughts, or words in quiet. I despise the world yet, I assure you, more than either Gay or you, and the court

more than all the rest of the world. As for those scribblers for whom you apprehend I would suppress my *Dulness* (which, by the way, for the future you are to call by a more pompous name, the *Dunciad*), how much that nest of hornets are my regard will easily appear to you when you read the *Treatise of the Bathos*.

At all adventures, yours and mine shall stand linked as friends to posterity, both in verse and prose, and (as Tully calls it) *in consuetudine studiorum*. Would to God our persons could but as well and as surely be inseparable! I find my other ties dropping from me; some worn off, some torn off, some relaxing daily: my greatest, both by duty, gratitude, and humanity, time is shaking every moment, and it now hangs but by a thread! I am many years the older for living so much with one so old; much the more helpless for having been so long helped and tendered by her; much the more considerate and tender, for a daily commerce with one who required me justly to be both to her; and consequently the more melancholy and thoughtful; and the less fit for others, who want only in a companion or a friend to be amused or entertained. My constitution too has had its share of decay as well as my spirits, and I am as much in the decline at forty as you at sixty. I believe we should be fit to live together could I get a little more health, which might make me not quite insupportable. Your deafness would agree with my dulness; you would not want me to speak when you could not hear. But God forbid you should be as destitute of the social comforts of life as I must when I lose my mother; or that ever you should lose your

more useful acquaintance so utterly, as to turn your thoughts to such a broken reed as I am, who could so ill supply your wants. I am extremely troubled at the return of your deafness; you cannot be too particular in the accounts of your health to me; everything you do or say in this kind obliges me, nay, delights me, to see the justice you do me in thinking me concerned in all your concerns; so that though the pleasantest thing you can tell me be that you are better or easier; next to that it pleases me that you make me the person you would complain to.

As the obtaining the love of valuable men is the happiest end I know of this life, so the next felicity is to get rid of fools and scoundrels; which I cannot but own to you was one part of my design in falling upon these authors, whose incapacity is not greater than their insincerity, and of whom I have always found (if I may quote myself),

> That each bad author is as bad a friend.

This poem will rid me of these insects.

> Cedite, Romani scriptores, cedite, Graii;
> *Nescio quid* maius nascitur Iliade.

I mean than *my Iliad*; and I call it *Nescio quid*, which is a degree of modesty; but however, if it silence these fellows, it must be something greater than any *Iliad* in Christendom. Adieu.

To the same

A farming friend, and the Dunciad

Dawley, 28 *June*, 1728.

I NOW hold the pen for my Lord Bolingbroke, who is reading your letter between two haycocks, but his attention is somewhat diverted by casting his eyes on the clouds, not in admiration of what you say, but for fear of a shower. He is pleased with your placing him in the triumvirate between yourself and me: though he says, that he doubts he shall fare like Lepidus, while one of us runs away with all the power, like Augustus, and another with all the pleasures, like Anthony. It is upon a foresight of this that he has fitted up his farm, and you will agree that his scheme of retreat at least is not founded upon weak appearances. Upon his return from the Bath, all peccant humours, he finds, are purged out of him; and his great temperance and economy are so signal, that the first is fit for my constitution, and the latter would enable you to lay up so much money as to buy a bishopric in England. As to the return of his health and vigour, were you here, you might inquire of his haymakers; but as to his temperance, I can answer that (for one whole day) we have had nothing for dinner but mutton broth, beans, and bacon, and a barn-door fowl.

Now his lordship is run after his cart, I have a moment left to myself to tell you, that I overheard him yesterday agree with a painter for £200, to paint his country hall with trophies of rakes, spades, prongs, &c., and other ornaments, merely

to countenance his calling this place a farm—now turn over a new leaf.

He bids me assure you, he should be sorry not to have more schemes of kindness for his friends than of ambition for himself; there, though his schemes may be weak, the motives at least are strong; and he says farther, if you could bear as great a fall and decrease of your revenues, as he knows by experience he can, you would not live in Ireland an hour.

The *Dunciad* is going to be printed in all pomp, with the inscription, which makes me proudest. It will be attended with *proeme*, *prolegomena*, *testimonia scriptorum*, *index authorum*, and notes *variorum*. As to the latter, I desire you to read over the text, and make a few in any way you like best; whether dry raillery, upon the style and way of commenting of trivial critics; or humourous, upon the authors in the poem; or historical, of persons, places, times; or explanatory, or collecting the parallel passages of the ancients. Adieu. I am pretty well, my mother not ill, Dr. Arbuthnot vexed with his fever by intervals; I am afraid he declines, and we shall lose a worthy man: I am troubled about him very much.

To the same

An invitation to England

23 *March*, 1736-7.

Though you were never to write to me, yet what you desired in your last, that I would write often to you, would be a very easy task: for every day I talk with you, and of you, in my heart; and

I need only set down what that is thinking of. The nearer I find myself verging to that period of life which is to be labour and sorrow, the more I prop myself upon those few supports that are left me. People in this state are like props indeed; they cannot stand alone, but two or more of them can stand, leaning and bearing upon one another. I wish you and I might pass this part of life together. My only necessary care is at an end. I am now my own master too much; my house is too large; my gardens furnish too much wood and provision for my use. My servants are sensible and tender of me; they have intermarried, and are become rather low friends than servants; and to all those that I see here with pleasure, they take a pleasure in being useful. I conclude this is your case too in your domestic life, and I sometimes think of your old housekeeper as my nurse, though I tremble at the sea, which only divides us. As your fears are not so great as mine, and I firmly hope your strength still much greater, is it utterly impossible it might once more be some pleasure to you to see England? My sole motive in proposing France to meet in, was the narrowness of the passage by sea from hence, the physicians having told me the weakness of my breast, &c., is such, as a sea-sickness might endanger my life. Though one or two of our friends are gone since you saw your native country, there remain a few more who will last so till death; and who I cannot but hope have an attractive power to draw you back to a country which cannot quite be sunk or enslaved, while such spirits remain. And let me tell you, there are a few more of the same spirit, who would awaken all your old ideas, and revive your hopes

of her future recovery and virtue. These look up to you with reverence, and would be animated by the sight of him at whose soul they have taken fire in his writings, and derived from thence as much love of their species as is consistent with a contempt for the knaves in it.

I could never be weary, except at the eyes, of writing to you; but my real reason (and a strong one it is) for doing it so seldom, is fear; fear of a very great and experienced evil, that of my letters being kept by the partiality of friends, and passing into the hands and malice of enemies, who publish them with all their imperfections on their head, so that I write not on the common terms of honest men.

Would to God you would come over with Lord Orrery, whose care of you in the voyage I could so certainly depend on; and bring with you your old housekeeper and two or three servants. I have room for all, a heart for all, and (think what you will) a fortune for all. We could, were we together, contrive to make our last days easy, and leave some sort of monument, what friends two wits could be in spite of all the fools in the world. Adieu.

SAMUEL RICHARDSON

1689-1761

To Miss Mulso

A discussion on love

3 *Sept.* 1751.

You tell me, my dear Miss Mulso, that I am really such a bamboozler on the subject of love, that you can't tell what to make of me. 'Sometimes' say you, 'I am persuaded that you have a noble and just idea of the noblest kind of love, and sometimes I think that you and I have different ideas of passion.'

In another place, you are offended with the word gratitude ; as if your idea of love excluded gratitude.

And further on, you are offended that I call this same passion 'a little selfish passion'.

And you say that you have known few girls, and still fewer men, whom you have thought 'capable of being in love'.

'By this', proceed you, 'you will see that my ideas of the word love are different from yours, when you call it a little selfish passion'.

Now, madam, if that passion is not little and selfish that makes two vehement souls prefer the gratification of each other, often to a sense of duty, and always to the whole world without them, be pleased to tell me what is ? And pray be so good as to define to me what the noble passion is, of

which so few people of either sex are capable. Give me your ideas of it.

I put not this question as a puzzler, a bamboozler, but purely for information; and that I may make my Sir Charles susceptible of the generous (may I say generous ?) flame, and yet know what he is about, yet be a reasonable man.

Harriet's passion is founded in gratitude for relief given her in a great exigence. But the man who rescued her is not, it seems, to have such a word as gratitude in his head, in return for her love.

I repeat, that I will please you if I can; please you, Miss Mulso, I here mean (before I meant not you particularly, my dear, but your sex), in Sir Charles's character; and I sincerely declare, that I would rather form his character to your liking, than to the liking of three parts out of four of the persons I am acquainted with.

You are one of my best girls, and best judges. Of whom have I the opinion that I have of Miss Mulso on these nice subjects ?—I ask therefore repeatedly for your definition of the passion which you dignify by the word noble; and from which you exclude everything mean, little, or selfish.

And you really think it marvellous that a young woman should find a man of exalted merit to be in love with ? Why, truly, I am half of your mind; for how should people find what, in general, they do not seek ? Yet what good creatures are many girls ! They will be in love for all that.

Why, yes, to be sure, they would be glad of a Sir Charles Grandison, and prefer him even to a Lovelace, were he capable of being terribly in love. And yet, I know one excellent girl who is afraid 'that ladies in general will think him too wise'.—

Dear, dear girls, help me to a few monkey-tricks to throw into his character, in order to shield him from contempt for his wisdom.

'It is one of my maxims,' you say, 'that people even of bad hearts will admire and love people of good ones.' Very true!—and yet admiration and love, in the sense before us, do not always shake hands, except at parting, and with an intention never to meet again. I have known women who professed to admire good men, but have chosen to marry men—not so good, when lovers of both sorts have tendered themselves to their acceptance. There is something very pretty in the sound of the word wild, added to the word fellow; and good sense is a very grateful victim to be sacrificed on the altar of love. Fervour and extravagance in expressions will please. How shall a woman, who, moreover, loves to be admired, know a man's heart, but from his lips?—Let him find flattery, and she will find credulity. Sweet souls! can they be always contradicting?

You believe it is not in human nature, however depraved, to prefer evil to good in another, whatever people may do in themselves. Why, no one would really think so, did not experience convince us that many, very many young women, in the article of marriage, though not before thought to be very depraved, are taken by this green sickness of the soul, and prefer dirt and rubbish to wholesome diet. The result of the matter is this, with very many young women: they will admire a good man, but they will marry a bad one. Are not rakes pretty fellows?

But one thing let me add, to comfort you in relation to Harriet's difficulties: I intend to make

her shine by her cordial approbation, as she goes along, of every good action of her beloved. She is humbled by her love (suspense in love is a mortifier) to think herself inferior to his sisters; but I intend to raise her above them, even in her own just opinion; and when she shines out the girl worthy of a man, not exalt, but reward her, and at the same time make him think himself highly rewarded by the love of so frank and so right an heart.

There now!—Will that do, my Miss Mulso?

I laid indeed a heavy hand on the good Clarissa. But I had begun with her, with a view to the future saint in her character; and could she, but by sufferings, shine as she does?

Do you, my dear child, look upon me as your paternal friend.

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU

1690-1762

To the Countess of Mar

The Viennese court

Vienna, 14 *Sept.* o.s. [1716].

Though I have so lately troubled you, my dear sister, with a long letter, yet I will keep my promise in giving you an account of my first going to court.

In order to that ceremony, I was squeezed up in a gown, and adorned with a gorget and the other implements thereunto belonging: a dress very inconvenient, but which certainly shews the neck and shape to great advantage. I cannot forbear in this place giving you some description of the fashions here, which are more monstrous and contrary to all common sense and reason, than 't is possible for you to imagine. They build certain fabrics of gauze on their heads about a yard high, consisting of three or four stories, fortified with numberless yards of heavy ribbon. The foundation of this structure is a thing they call a *Bourle*, which is exactly of the same shape and kind, but about four times as big, as those rolls our prudent milk-maids make use of to fix their pails upon. This machine they cover with their own hair, which they mix with a great deal of false, it being a particular beauty to have their heads too large to go into a moderate tub. Their hair is prodigiously

powdered, to conceal the mixture, and set out with three or four rows of bodkins (wonderfully large, that stick two or three inches from their hair), made of diamonds, pearls, red, green, and yellow stones, that it certainly requires as much art and experience to carry the load upright, as to dance upon May-day with the garland. Their whalebone petticoats outdo ours by several yards circumference, and cover some acres of ground.

You may easily suppose how much this extraordinary dress sets off and improves the natural ugliness with which God Almighty has been pleased to endow them all generally. Even the lovely empress herself is obliged to comply, in some degree, with these absurd fashions, which they would not quit for all the world. I had a private audience (according to ceremony) of half an hour, and then all the other ladies were permitted to come make their court. I was perfectly charmed with the empress: I cannot, however, tell you that her features are regular; her eyes are not large, but have a lively look, full of sweetness; her complexion the finest I ever saw; her nose and forehead well-made, but her mouth has ten thousand charms that touch the soul. When she smiles, 'tis with a beauty and sweetness that force adoration. She has a vast quantity of fine fair hair; but then her person!—one must speak of it poetically to do it rigid justice; all that the poets have said of the mien of Juno, the air of Venus, comes not up to the truth. The Graces move with her; the famous statue of Medicis was not formed with more delicate proportions; nothing can be added to the beauty of her neck and hands. Till I saw them, I did not

believe there were any in nature so perfect, and I was almost sorry that my rank here did not permit me to kiss them ; but they are kissed sufficiently ; for every body that waits on her pays that homage at their entrance, and when they take leave.

When the ladies were come in, she sat down to Quinze. I could not play at a game I had never seen before, and she ordered me a seat at her right hand, and had the goodness to talk to me very much, with that grace so natural to her. I expected every moment when the men were to come in to pay their court ; but this drawing-room is very different from that of England ; no man enters it but the old grand-master, who comes in to advertize the empress of the approach of the emperor. His imperial majesty did me the honour of speaking to me in a very obliging manner ; but he never speaks to any of the other ladies ; and the whole passes with a gravity and air of ceremony that has something very formal in it.

The empress Amelia, dowager of the late emperor Joseph, came this evening to wait on the reigning empress, followed by the two archduchesses her daughters, who are very agreeable young princesses. Their imperial majesties rise and go to meet her at the door of the room, after which she is seated in an armed chair, next the empress, and in the same manner at supper, and there the men had the permission of paying their Court. The archduchesses sit on chairs with backs without arms. The table is entirely served, and all the dishes set on by the empress's maids of honour, which are twelve young ladies of the first quality. They have no salary, but their chambers

at court, where they live in a sort of confinement, not being suffered to go to the assemblies or public places in town, except in compliment to the wedding of a sister maid, whom the empress always presents with her picture set in diamonds. The three first of them are called *Ladies of the Key*, and wear gold keys by their sides; but what I find most pleasant, is the custom which obliges them, as long as they live, after they have left the empress's service, to make her some present every year on the day of her feast. Her majesty is served by no married women but the *grande maîtresse*, who is generally a widow of the first quality, always very old, and is at the same time groom of the stole, and mother of the maids. The dresses are not at all in the figure they pretend to in England, being looked upon no otherwise than as downright chambermaids.

I had audience next day of the empress mother, a princess of great virtue and goodness, but who piques herself so much on a violent devotion; she is perpetually performing extraordinary acts of penance, without having ever done anything to deserve them. She has the same number of maids of honour, whom she suffers to go in colours; but she herself never quits her mourning; and sure nothing can be more dismal than the mourning here, even for a brother. There is not the least bit of linen to be seen; all black crape instead of it. The neck, ears, and side of the face covered with a plaited piece of the same stuff, and the face that peeps out in the midst of it, looks as if it were pilloried. The widows wear, over and above, a crape forehead cloth; and in this solemn weed go to all the public places of diversion without scruple.

The next day I was to wait on the empress Amelia, who is now at her palace of retirement half a mile from the town. I had there the pleasure of seeing a diversion wholly new to me, but which is the common amusement of this court. The empress herself was seated on a little throne at the end of a fine alley in the garden, and on each side of her were ranged two parties of her ladies of honour with other young ladies of quality, headed by the two young archduchesses, all dressed in their hair full of jewels, with fine light guns in their hands; and at proper distances were placed three oval pictures, which were the marks to be shot at. The first was that of a CUPID, filling a bumper of Burgundy, and this motto, *'Tis easy to be valiant here.* The second a FORTUNE, holding a garland in her hand, the motto, *For her whom Fortune favours.* The third was a SWORD, with a laurel wreath on the point, the motto, *Here is no shame to the vanquished.* Near the empress was a gilded trophy wreathed with flowers, and made of little crooks, on which were hung rich Turkish handkerchiefs, tippets, ribbons, laces, etc., for the small prizes. The empress gave the first with her own hand, which was a fine ruby ring set round with diamonds, in a gold snuff-box. There was for the second, a little Cupid set with brilliants; and besides these, a set of fine china for a tea-table enchased in gold, japan trunks, fans, and many gallantries of the same nature. All the men of quality at Vienna were spectators; but only the ladies had permission to shoot, and the Archduchess Amelia carried off the first prize. I was very well pleased with having seen this entertainment, and I do not know but it might make as

good a figure as the prize-shooting in the *Eneid*, if I could write as well as Virgil. This is the favourite pleasure of the emperor, and there is rarely a week without some feast of this kind, which makes the young ladies skilful enough to defend a fort, and they laughed very much to see me afraid to handle a gun.

My dear sister, you will easily pardon an abrupt conclusion. I believe, by this time, you are ready to fear I would never conclude at all.

To Mrs. Sarah Chiswell

Ingrafting for small-pox

Adrianople, 1 *April*, o.s. [1717].

In my opinion, dear S., I ought rather to quarrel with you for not answering my Nimeguen letter of August till December, than to excuse my not writing again till now. I am sure there is on my side a very good excuse for silence, having gone such tiresome land-journeys, though I don't find the conclusion of them so bad as you seem to imagine. I am very easy here, and not in the solitude you fancy me. The great number of Greek, French, English, and Italians, that are under our protection, make their court to me from morning till night; and, I'll assure you, are many of them very fine ladies; for there is no possibility for a Christian to live easily under this government but by the protection of an embassador—and the richer they are, the greater their danger.

Those dreadful stories you have heard of the plague have very little foundation in truth. I own

I have much ado to reconcile myself to the sound of a word which has always given me such terrible ideas, though I am convinced there is little more in it than a fever. As a proof we passed through two or three towns most violently infected. In the very next house where we lay (in one of them) two persons died of it. Luckily for me, I knew nothing of the matter ; and I was made believe, that our second cook who fell ill here, had only a great cold. However, we left our doctor to take care of him, and yesterday they both arrived here in good health ; and now I am let into the secret that he has had the *plague*. There are many that escape it ; neither is the air ever infected. I am persuaded that it would be as easy to root it out here as out of Italy and France ; but it does so little mischief, they are not very solicitous about it, and are content to suffer this distemper instead of our variety, which they are utterly unacquainted with.

A propos of distempers : I am going to tell you a thing that I am sure will make you wish yourself here. The small-pox, so fatal and so general among us, is here entirely harmless by the invention of *ingrafting*, which is the term they give it. There is a set of old women who make it their business to perform the operation every autumn, in the month of September, when the great heat is abated. People send to one another to know if any of their family has a mind to have the small-pox : they make parties for this purpose, and when they are met (commonly fifteen or sixteen together) the old woman comes with a nut-shell full of the matter of the best sort of small-pox, and asks what veins you please to have opened. She immediately rips open that you offer to her with a large needle

(which gives you no more pain than a common scratch), and puts into the vein as much venom as can lie upon the head of her needle, and after that binds up the little wound with a hollow bit of shell ; and in this manner opens four or five veins. The Grecians have commonly the superstition of opening one in the middle of the forehead, in each arm, and on the breast, to mark the sign of the cross ; but this has a very ill effect, all these wounds leaving little scars, and is not done by those that are not superstitious, who choose to have them in the legs, or that part of the arm that is concealed. The children or young patients play together all the rest of the day, and are in perfect health to the eighth. Then the fever begins to seize them, and they keep their beds two days, very seldom three. They have very rarely above twenty or thirty in their faces, which never mark ; and in eight days' time they are as well as before their illness. Where they are wounded, there remain running sores during the distemper, which I don't doubt is a great relief to it. Every year thousands undergo this operation ; and the French embassador says pleasantly, that they take the small-pox here by way of diversion, as they take the waters in other countries. There is no example of any one that has died in it ; and you may believe I am very well satisfied of the safety of the experiment, since I intend to try it on my dear little son.

I am patriot enough to take pains to bring this useful invention into fashion in England ; and I should not fail to write to some of our doctors very particularly about it, if I knew any one of them that I thought had virtue enough to destroy such a considerable branch of their revenue for the good

of mankind. But that distemper is too beneficial to them not to expose to all their resentment the hardy wight that should undertake to put an end to it. Perhaps, if I live to return, I may, however, have courage to war with them. Upon this occasion admire the heroism in the heart of your friend.

To the Countess of Bristol

The Grand Signior a slave

Adrianople, 1 *April*, o.s. 1717.

As I never can forget the smallest of your ladyship's commands, my first business here has been to inquire after the stuffs you ordered me to look for, without being able to find what you would like. The difference of the dress here and at London is so great, the same sort of things are not proper for *caftans* and *manteaus*. However, I will not give over my search, but renew it again at Constantinople, though I have reason to believe there is nothing finer than what is to be found here, being the present residence of the court. The Grand Signior's eldest daughter was married some few days before I came; and upon that occasion the Turkish ladies display all their magnificence. The bride was conducted to her husband's house in very great splendour. She is widow of the late Vizier, who was killed at Peterwaradin, though that ought rather to be called a contract than a marriage, not having ever lived with him: however, the greatest part of his wealth is hers. He had the permission of visiting her in the seraglio; and,

being one of the handsomest men in the empire, had very much engaged her affections.—When she saw this second husband, who is at least fifty, she could not forbear bursting into tears. He is a man of merit, and the declared favourite of the Sultan (which they call *mosáyp*); but that is not enough to make him pleasing in the eyes of a girl of thirteen.

The government here is entirely in the hands of the army: and the Grand Signior, with all his absolute power, as much a slave as any of his subjects, and trembles at a janissary's frown. Here is, indeed, a much greater appearance of subjection than among us: a minister of state is not spoken to, but upon the knee; should a reflection on his conduct be dropped in a coffee-house (for they have spies everywhere), the house would be razed to the ground, and perhaps the whole company put to the torture. No huzzaing mobs, senseless pamphlets, and tavern disputes about politics:

> A consequential ill that freedom draws;
> A bad effect,—but from a noble cause.

None of our harmless calling names! but when a minister here displeases the people, in three hours' time he is dragged even from his master's arms. They cut off his hands, head, and feet, and throw them before the palace gate, with all the respect in the world; while that Sultan (to whom they all profess an unlimited adoration) sits trembling in his apartment, and dare neither defend nor revenge his favourite. This is the blessed condition of the most absolute monarch upon earth, who owns no *law* but his *will*.

I cannot help wishing, in the loyalty of my heart, that the parliament would send hither a ship-load of your passive-obedient men, that they might see arbitrary government in its clearest strongest light, where it is hard to judge whether the prince, people, or ministers, are most miserable. I could make many reflections on this subject; but I know, madam, your own good sense has already furnished you with better than I am capable of.

I went yesterday with the French embassadors to see the Grand Signior in his passage to the mosque. He was preceded by a numerous guard of janissaries, with vast white feathers on their heads, *spahis* and *bostangees* (these are foot and horse guards), and the royal gardeners, which are a very considerable body of men, dressed in different habits of fine lively colours, that, at a distance, they appeared like a parterre of tulips. After them the aga of the janissaries, in a robe of purple velvet, lined with silver tissue, his horse led by two slaves richly dressed. Next him the *Kyzlár-aga* (your ladyship knows this is the chief guardian of the seraglio ladies) in a deep yellow cloth (which suited very well to his black face) lined with sables, and last his Sublimity himself, in green lined with the fur of a black Muscovite fox, which is supposed worth a thousand pounds sterling, mounted on a fine horse, with furniture embroidered with jewels. Six more horses richly furnished were led after him; and two of his principal courtiers bore, one his gold, and the other his silver coffee-pot, on a staff; another carried a silver stool on his head for him to sit on.

It would be too tedious to tell your ladyship the various dresses and turbans by which their rank

is distinguished; but they were all extremely rich and gay, to the number of some thousands; that, perhaps, there cannot be seen a more beautiful procession. The Sultan appeared to us a handsome man of about forty, with a very graceful air, but something severe in his countenance, his eyes very full and black. He happened to stop under the window where we stood, and (I suppose being told who we were) looked upon us very attentively, that we had full leisure to consider him, and the French embassadress agreed with me as to his good mien: I see that lady very often; she is young, and her conversation would be a great relief to me, if I could persuade her to live without those forms and ceremonies that make life formal and tiresome. But she is so delighted with her guards, her four-and-twenty footmen, gentlemen ushers, etc., that she would rather die than make me a visit without them: not to reckon a coachful of attending damsels yclep'd maids of honour. What vexes me is, that as long as she will visit with a troublesome equipage, I am obliged to do the same: however, our mutual interest makes us much together.

I went with her the other day all round the town, in an open gilt chariot, with our joint train of attendants, preceded by our guards, who might have summoned the people to see what they had never seen, nor ever would see again—two young Christian embassadresses never yet having been in this country at the same time, nor I believe ever will again. Your ladyship may easily imagine that we drew a vast crowd of spectators, but all silent as death. If any of them had taken the liberties of our mob upon any strange sight, our

janissaries had made no scruple of falling on them with their scimitars, without danger for so doing, being above law.

Yet these people have some good qualities ; they are very zealous and faithful where they serve, and look upon it as their business to fight for you upon all occasions. Of this I had a very pleasant instance in a village on this side Philipopolis, where we were met by our domestic guard. I happened to bespeak pigeons for my supper, upon which one of my janissaries went immediately to the Cadi (the chief civil officer of the town), and ordered him to send in some dozens. The poor man answered that he had already sent about, but could get none. My janissary, in the height of his zeal for my service, immediately locked him up prisoner in his room, telling him he deserved death for his impudence, in offering to excuse his not obeying my command ; but, out of respect to me, he would not punish him but by my order, and accordingly, came very gravely to me, to ask what should be done to him ; adding, by way of compliment, that if I pleased he would bring me his head. This may give you some idea of the unlimited power of these fellows, who are all sworn brothers, and bound to revenge the injuries done to one another, whether at Cairo, Aleppo, or any part of the world ; and this inviolable league makes them so powerful, that the greatest man at court never speaks to them but in a flattering tone ; and in Asia, any man that is rich is forced to enrol himself a janissary, to secure his estate.

But I have already said enough ; and I dare swear, dear madam, that, by this time, 't is a very comfortable reflection to you that there is no

possibility of your receiving such a tedious letter but once in six months ; 't is that consideration has given me the assurance to entertain you so long, and will, I hope, plead the excuse of, dear madam, &c.

To the Countess of Mar

The Grand Vizier's lady

Adrianople, 18 *April*, o.s. [1717].

I wrote to you, dear sister, and to all my other English correspondents, by the last ship, and only Heaven can tell when I shall have another opportunity of sending to you ; but I cannot forbear writing, though perhaps my letter may lie upon my hands this two months. To confess the truth, my head is so full of my entertainment yesterday, that 't is absolutely necessary for my own repose to give it some vent. Without farther preface, I will then begin my story. I was invited to dine with the Grand Vizier's lady, and it was with a great deal of pleasure I prepared myself for an entertainment which was never given before to any Christian. I thought I should very little satisfy her curiosity (which I did not doubt was a considerable motive to the invitation) by going in a dress she was used to see, and therefore dressed myself in the court habit of Vienna, which is much more magnificent than ours. However, I chose to go *incognita*, to avoid any disputes about ceremony, and went in a Turkish coach, only attended by my woman that held up my train, and the Greek lady who was my interpretress. I was met at the court door by her black eunuch, who helped me out of the

coach with great respect, and conducted me through several rooms, where her she-slaves, finely dressed, were ranged on each side. In the innermost I found the lady sitting on her sofa, in a sable vest. She advanced to meet me, and presented me half a dozen of her friends with great civility. She seemed a very good woman, near fifty years old. I was surprised to observe so little magnificence in her house, the furniture being all very moderate; and except the habits and number of her slaves, nothing about her that appeared expensive. She guessed at my thoughts, and told me that she was no longer of an age to spend either her time or money in superfluities; that her whole expense was in charity, and her whole employment praying to God. There was no affectation in this speech; both she and her husband are entirely given up to devotion. He never looks upon any other woman; and, what is much more extraordinary, touches no bribes, notwithstanding the example of all his predecessors. He is so scrupulous on this point, he would not accept Mr. Wortley's present, till he had been assured over and over that it was a settled perquisite of his place at the entrance of every ambassador.

She entertained me with all kind of civility till dinner came in, which was served, one dish at a time, to a vast number, all finely dressed after their manner, which I do not think so bad as you have perhaps heard it represented. I am a very good judge of their eating, having lived three weeks in the house of an *effendi* at Belgrade, who gave us very magnificent dinners, dressed by his own cooks, which the first week pleased me extremely; but I own I then began to grow

weary of it, and desired our own cook might add a dish or two after our manner. But I attribute this to custom. I am very much inclined to believe an Indian, that had never tasted of either, would prefer their cookery to ours. Their sauces are very high, all the roast very much done. They use a great deal of rich spice. The soup is served for the last dish ; and they have at least as great variety of ragouts as we have. I was very sorry I could not eat of as many as the good lady would have had me, who was very earnest in serving me of everything. The treat concluded with coffee and perfumes, which is a high mark of respect ; two slaves kneeling censed my hair, clothes, and handkerchief. After this ceremony, she commanded her slaves to play and dance, which they did with their guitars in their hands ; and she excused to me their want of skill, saying she took no care to accomplish them in that art.

I returned her thanks, and soon after took my leave. I was conducted back in the same manner I entered ; and would have gone straight to my own house ; but the Greek lady with me earnestly solicited me to visit the *Kiyàya's* lady, saying, he was the second officer in the empire, and ought indeed to be looked upon as the first, the Grand Vizier having only the name, while he exercised the authority. I had found so little diversion in this harem, that I had no mind to go into another. But her importunity prevailed with me, and I am extreme glad that I was so complaisant.

All things here were with quite another air than at the Grand Vizier's ; and the very house confessed the difference between an old devotee and a young beauty. It was nicely clean and magnificent.

I was met at the door by two black eunuchs, who led me through a long gallery between two ranks of beautiful young girls, with their hair finely plaited, almost hanging to their feet, all dressed in fine light damasks, brocaded with silver. I was sorry that decency did not permit me to stop to consider them nearer. But that thought was lost upon my entrance into a large room, or rather pavilion, built round with gilded sashes, which were most of them thrown up, and the trees planted near them gave an agreeable shade, which hindered the sun from being troublesome. The jessamines and honeysuckles that twisted round their trunks, shedding a soft perfume, increased by a white marble fountain playing sweet water in the lower part of the room, which fell into three or four basins with a pleasing sound. The roof was painted with all sort of flowers, falling out of gilded baskets, that seemed tumbling down. On a sofa, raised three steps, and covered with fine Persian carpets, sat the *Kiyàya's* lady, leaning on cushions of white satin, embroidered; and at her feet sat two young girls, the eldest about twelve years old, lovely as angels, dressed perfectly rich, and almost covered with jewels. But they were hardly seen near the fair Fatima (for that is her name), so much her beauty effaced every thing I have seen, all that has been called lovely either in England or Germany, and must own that I never saw any thing so gloriously beautiful, nor can I recollect a face that would have been taken notice of near hers. She stood up to receive me, saluting me after their fashion, putting her hand upon her heart with a sweetness full of majesty, that no court breeding could ever give. She ordered

cushions to be given to me, and took care to place me in the corner, which is the place of honour. I confess, though the Greek lady had before given me a great opinion of her beauty, I was so struck with admiration, that I could not for some time speak to her, being wholly taken up in gazing. That surprising harmony of features! that charming result of the whole! that exact proportion of body! that lovely bloom of complexion unsullied by art! the unutterable enchantment of her smile!—But her eyes!—large and black, with all the soft languishment of the blue! every turn of her face discovering some new charm.

After my first surprise was over, I endeavoured, by nicely examining her face, to find out some imperfection, without any fruit of my search, but being clearly convinced of the error of that vulgar notion, that a face perfectly regular would not be agreeable: nature having done for her with more success, what Apelles is said to have essayed, by a collection of the most exact features, to form a perfect face, and to that, a behaviour, so full of grace and sweetness, such easy motions, with an air so majestic, yet free from stiffness or affectation, that I am persuaded, could she be suddenly transported upon the most polite throne of Europe, nobody would think her other than born and bred to be a queen, though educated in a country we call barbarous. To say all in a word, our most celebrated English beauties would vanish near her.

She was dressed in a *caftán* of gold brocade, flowered with silver, very well fitted to her shape, and shewing to advantage the beauty of her bosom, only shaded by the thin guaze of her shift. Her drawers were pale pink, green and silver, her

slippers white, finely embroidered; her lovely arms adorned with bracelets of diamonds, and her broad girdle set round with diamonds; upon her head a rich Turkish handkerchief of pink and silver, her own fine black hair hanging a great length in various tresses, and on one side of her head some bodkins of jewels. I am afraid you will accuse me of extravagance in this description. I think I have read somewhere that women always speak in rapture when they speak of beauty, but I cannot imagine why they should not be allowed to do so. I rather think it virtue to be able to admire without any mixture of desire or envy. The gravest writers have spoken with great warmth of some celebrated pictures and statues. The workmanship of Heaven certainly excels all our weak imitations, and, I think, has a much better claim to our praise. For me, I am not ashamed to own I took more pleasure in looking on the beauteous Fatima, than the finest piece of sculpture could have given me.

She told me the two girls at her feet were her daughters, though she appeared too young to be their mother. Her fair maids were ranged below the sofa, to the number of twenty, and put me in mind of the pictures of the ancient nymphs. I did not think all nature could have furnished such a scene of beauty. She made them a sign to play and dance. Four of them immediately began to play some soft airs on instruments between a lute and a guitar, which they accompanied with their voices, while the others danced by turns. This dance was very different from what I had seen before. Nothing could be more artful. . . . The tunes so soft!—the motions so

languishing !—accompanied with pauses and dying eyes ! half-falling back, and then recovering themselves in so artful a manner. . . . I suppose you may have read that the Turks have no music but what is shocking to the ears ; but this account is from those who never heard any, but what is played in the streets, and is just as reasonable as if a foreigner should take his ideas of the English music from the bladder and string, and marrow-bone and cleavers. I can assure you that the music is extremely pathetic ; 't is true I am inclined to prefer the Italian, but perhaps I am partial. I am acquainted with a Greek lady who sings better than Mrs. Robinson, and is very well skilled in both, who gives the preference to the Turkish. 'T is certain they have very fine natural voices ; these were very agreeable. When the dance was over, four fair slaves came into the room with silver censers in their hands, and perfumed the room with amber, aloes-wood, and other scents. After this they served me coffee upon their knees in the finest japan china, with *soucoupes* of silver, gilt. The lovely Fatima entertained me all this while in the most polite agreeable manner, calling me often *Guzél sultanum*, or the beautiful sultana, and desiring my friendship with the best grace in the world, lamenting that she could not entertain me in my own language.

When I took my leave, two maids brought in a fine silver basket of embroidered handkerchiefs ; she begged I would wear the richest for her sake, and gave the others to my woman and interpretress. I returned through the same ceremonies as before, and could not help fancying I had been some time in Mahomet's paradise, so much I was charmed

with what I had seen. I know not how the relation of it appears to you. I wish it may give you part of my pleasure; for I would have my dear sister share in all the diversions of, &c.

To the Countess of Bute

Her grand-daughter's education

28 *Jan.* N.S. [1753].

Dear Child,

You have given me a great deal of satisfaction by your account of your eldest daughter. I am particularly pleased to hear she is a good arithmetician; it is the best proof of understanding: the knowledge of numbers is one of the chief distinctions between us and the brutes. If there is anything in blood, you may reasonably expect your children should be endowed with an uncommon share of good sense. Mr. Wortley's family and mine have both produced some of the greatest men that have been born in England: I mean Admiral Sandwich, and my grandfather, who was distinguished by the name of Wise William. I have heard Lord Bute's father mentioned as an extraordinary genius, though he had not many opportunities of showing it; and his uncle, the present Duke of Argyll, has one of the best heads I ever knew. I will therefore speak to you as supposing Lady Mary not only capable, but desirous of learning: in that case by all means let her be indulged in it. You will tell me I did not make it a part of your education: your prospect was very different from hers. As you had no defect either in mind or person to hinder, and

much in your circumstances to attract the highest offers, it seemed your business to learn how to live in the world, as it is hers to know how to be easy out of it. It is the common error of builders and parents to follow some plan they think beautiful (and perhaps is so), without considering that nothing is beautiful that is displaced. Hence we see so many edifices raised that the raisers can never inhabit, being too large for their fortunes. Vistas are laid open over barren heaths, and apartments contrived for a coolness very agreeable in Italy, but killing in the north of Britain: thus every woman endeavours to breed her daughter a fine lady, qualifying her for a station in which she will never appear, and at the same time incapacitating her for that retirement to which she is destined. Learning, if she has a real taste for it, will not only make her contented, but happy in it. No entertainment is so cheap as reading, nor any pleasure so lasting. She will not want new fashions, nor regret the loss of expensive diversions, or variety of company, if she can be amused with an author in her closet. To render this amusement extensive, she should be permitted to learn the languages. I have heard it lamented that boys lose so many years in mere learning of words: this is no objection to a girl, whose time is not so precious: she cannot advance herself in any profession, and has therefore more hours to spare; and as you say her memory is good, she will be very agreeably employed this way. There are two cautions to be given on this subject: first, not to think herself learned when she can read Latin, or even Greek. Languages are more properly to be called vehicles of learning than

learning itself, as may be observed in many schoolmasters, who, though perhaps critics in grammar, are the most ignorant fellows upon earth. True knowledge consists in knowing things, not words. I would wish her no further a linguist than to enable her to read books in their originals, that are often corrupted, and always injured, by translations. Two hours' application every morning will bring this about much sooner than you can imagine, and she will have leisure enough besides to run over the English poetry, which is a more important part of a woman's education than it is generally supposed. Many a young damsel has been ruined by a fine copy of verses, which she would have laughed at if she had known it had been stolen from Mr. Waller. I remember, when I was a girl, I saved one of my companions from destruction, who communicated to me an epistle she was quite charmed with. As she had a natural good taste, she observed the lines were not so smooth as Prior's or Pope's, but had more thought and spirit than any of theirs. She was wonderfully delighted with such a demonstration of her lover's sense and passion, and not a little pleased with her own charms, that had force enough to inspire such elegancies. In the midst of this triumph I showed her that they were taken from Randolph's poems, and the unfortunate transcriber was dismissed with the scorn he deserved. To say truth, the poor plagiary was very unlucky to fall into my hands; that author being no longer in fashion, would have escaped any one of less universal reading than myself. You should encourage your daughter to talk over with you what she reads; and, as you are very

capable of distinguishing, take care she does not mistake pert folly for wit and humour, or rhyme for poetry, which are the common errors of young people, and have a train of ill consequences. The second caution to be given her (and which is most absolutely necessary) is to conceal whatever learning she attains, with as much solicitude as she would hide crookedness or lameness; the parade of it can only serve to draw on her the envy, and consequently the most inveterate hatred, of all he and she fools, which will certainly be at least three parts in four of all her acquaintance. The use of knowledge in our sex, besides the amusement of solitude, is to moderate the passions, and learn to be contented with a small expense, which are the certain effects of a studious life; and it may be preferable even to that fame which men have engrossed to themselves, and will not suffer us to share. You will tell me I have not observed this rule myself; but you are mistaken: it is only inevitable accident that has given me any reputation that way. I have always carefully avoided it, and ever thought it a misfortune. The explanation of this paragraph would occasion a long digression, which I will not trouble you with, it being my present design only to say what I think useful for the instruction of my granddaughter, which I have much at heart. If she has the same inclination (I should say passion) for learning that I was born with, history, geography, and philosophy will furnish her with materials to pass away cheerfully a longer life than is allotted to mortals. I believe there are few heads capable of making Sir I. Newton's calculations, but the result of them is not difficult to be understood by a moderate

capacity. Do not fear this should make her affect the character of Lady ——, or Lady ——, or Mrs. ——: those women are ridiculous, not because they have learning, but because they have it not. One thinks herself a complete historian, after reading Echard's Roman History; another a profound philosopher, having got by heart some of Pope's unintelligible essays; and a third an able divine, on the strength of Whitefield's sermons: thus you hear them screaming politics and controversy.

It is a saying of Thucydides, ignorance is bold, and knowledge reserved. Indeed, it is impossible to be far advanced in it without being more humbled by a conviction of human ignorance than elated by learning. At the same time I recommend books, I neither exclude work nor drawing. I think it as scandalous for a woman not to know how to use a needle, as for a man not to know how to use a sword. I was once extremely fond of my pencil, and it was a great mortification to me when my father turned off my master, having made a considerable progress for a short time I learnt. My over-eagerness in the pursuit of it had brought a weakness on my eyes, that made it necessary to leave it off; and all the advantage I got was the improvement of my hand. I see, by hers, that practice will make her a ready writer: she may attain it by serving you for a secretary, when your health or affairs make it troublesome to you to write yourself; and custom will make it an agreeable amusement to her. She cannot have too many for that station of life which will probably be her fate. The ultimate end of your education was to make

you a good wife (and I have the comfort to hear that you are one): hers ought to be, to make her happy in a virgin state. I will not say it is happier; but it is undoubtedly safer than any marriage. In a lottery, where there are (at the lowest computation) ten thousand blanks to a prize, it is the most prudent choice not to venture. I have always been so thoroughly persuaded of this truth, that, notwithstanding the flattering views I had for you (as I never intended you a sacrifice to my vanity), I thought I owed you the justice to lay before you all the hazards attending matrimony: you may recollect I did so in the strongest manner. Perhaps you may have more success in the instructing your daughter: she has so much company at home, she will not need seeking it abroad, and will more readily take the notions you think fit to give her. As you were alone in my family, it would have been thought a great cruelty to suffer you no companions of your own age, especially having so many near relations, and I do not wonder their opinions influenced yours. I was not sorry to see you not determined on a single life, knowing it was not your father's intention, and contented myself with endeavouring to make your home so easy that you might not be in haste to leave it.

I am afraid you will think this a very long and insignificant letter. I hope the kindness of the design will excuse it, being willing to give you every proof in my power that I am,

Your most affectionate mother.

To the same

Fielding and other authors

Lovere, 22 *Sept.* [1755].

My dear Child,

I received, two days ago, the box of books you were so kind to send; but I can scarce say whether my pleasure or disappointment was greatest. I was much pleased to see before me a fund of amusement, but heartily vexed to find your letter consisting only of three lines and a half. Why will you not employ Lady Mary as secretary, if it is troublesome to you to write? I have told you over and over, you may at the same time oblige your mother and improve your daughter, both which I should think very agreeable to yourself. You can never want something to say. The history of your nursery, if you had no other subject to write on, would be very acceptable to me. I am such a stranger to everything in England, I should be glad to hear more particulars relating to the families I am acquainted with: if Miss Liddel marries the Lord Euston I knew, or his nephew, who has succeeded him; if Lord Berkeley has left children; and several trifles of that sort, that would be a satisfaction to my curiosity. I am sorry for H. Fielding's death, not only as I shall read no more of his writings, but I believe he lost more than others, as no man enjoyed life more than he did, though few had less reason to do so, the highest of his preferment being raking in the lowest sinks of vice and misery. I should think it a nobler and less nauseous employment to be one of the staff officers that conduct the nocturnal

weddings. His happy constitution (even when he had, with great pains, half demolished it) made him forget everything when he was before a venison pasty, or over a flask of champagne; and I am persuaded he has known more happy moments than any prince upon earth. His natural spirits gave him rapture with his cook-maid, and cheerfulness when he was starving in a garret. There was a great similitude between his character and that of Sir Richard Steele. He had the advantage both in learning, and, in my opinion, genius: they both agreed in wanting money in spite of all their friends, and would have wanted it, if their hereditary lands had been as extensive as their imagination; yet each one of them so formed for happiness, it is a pity he was not immortal. . . . This Richardson is a strange fellow. I heartily despise him, and eagerly read him, nay, sob over his works in a most scandalous manner. The first two tomes of *Clarissa* touched me, as being very resembling to my maiden days; and I find in the pictures of Sir Thomas Grandison and his lady, what I have heard of my mother, and seen of my father. . . .

PHILIP DORMER STANHOPE, EARL OF CHESTERFIELD

1694–1773

TO HIS SON

Dancing

Dublin Castle, 29 *Nov.* 1745.

DEAR BOY,

I have received your last Saturday's performance, with which I am very well satisfied. I know or have heard of no Mr. St. Maurice here; and young Pain, whom I have made an ensign, was here upon the spot, as were every one of those I have named in these new levies.

Now that the Christmas breaking-up draws near, I have ordered Mr. Desnoyers to go to you, during that time, to teach you to dance. I desire that you will particularly attend to the graceful motion of your arms; which with the manner of putting on your hat, and giving your hand, is all that a gentleman need attend to. Dancing is in itself a very trifling, silly thing; but it is one of those established follies to which people of sense are sometimes obliged to conform; and then they should be able to do it well. And though I would not have you a dancer, yet when you do dance, I would have you dance well; as I would have you do everything you do, well. There is no one thing so trifling, but which (if it is to be done at all) ought to be done well; and I have often told you

that I wish you even played at pitch, and cricket, better than any boy at Westminster. For instance, dress is a very foolish thing ; and yet it is a very foolish thing for a man not to be well dressed, according to his rank and way of life ; and it is so far from being a disparagement to any man's understanding, that it is rather a proof of it, to be as well dressed as those whom he lives with : the difference in this case between a man of sense and a fop is, that the fop values himself upon his dress ; and the man of sense laughs at it, at the same time that he knows he must not neglect it. There are a thousand foolish customs of this kind, which not being criminal, must be complied with, and even cheerfully, by men of sense. Diogenes the cynic was a wise man for despising them ; but a fool for showing it. Be wiser than other people if you can ; but do not tell them so.

It is a very fortunate thing for Sir Charles Hotham, to have fallen into the hands of one of your age, experience, and knowledge of the world : I am persuaded you will take infinite care of him. Goodnight.

To the same

A good enunciation

London, 21 *June*, O.S. 1748.

Dear Boy,

Your very bad enunciation runs so much in my head, and gives me such real concern, that it will be the object of this, and I believe of many more letters. I congratulate both you and myself that I was informed of it (as I hope) in time to

prevent it; and shall ever think myself, as hereafter you will, I am sure, think yourself, infinitely obliged to Sir Charles Williams, for informing me of it. Good God! if this ungraceful and disagreeable manner of speaking had, either by your negligence or mine, become habitual to you, as in a couple of years more it would have been, what a figure would you have made in company, or in a public assembly! Who would have liked you in the one, or have attended to you in the other? Read what Cicero and Quintilian say of enunciation, and see what a stress they lay on the gracefulness of it; nay, Cicero goes farther, and even maintains that a good figure is necessary for an orator, and particularly that he must not be *vastus*; that is, overgrown and clumsy. He shows by it that he knew mankind well, and knew the powers of an agreeable figure and a graceful manner. Men, as well as women, are much oftener led by their hearts, than by their understandings. The way to the heart is through the senses; please their eyes and their ears, and the work is half done. I have frequently known a man's fortune decided for ever by his first address. If it is pleasing, people are hurried involuntarily into persuasion that he has a merit, which possibly he has not; as, on the other hand, if it is ungraceful, they are immediately prejudiced against him, and unwilling to allow him the merit which it may be he has. Nor is this sentiment so unjust and unreasonable as at first sight it may seem; for if a man has parts, he must know of what infinite consequence it is to him to have a graceful manner of speaking, and a genteel and pleasing address: he will cultivate and improve them to the utmost. Your figure is

a good one; you have no natural defects in the organs of speech; your address may be engaging, and your manner of speaking graceful, if you will; so that, if they are not so, neither I nor the world can ascribe it to anything but your want of parts. What is the constant and just observation as to all the actors upon the stage? Is it not, that those who have the best sense always speak the best, though they may not happen to have the best voices? They will speak plainly, distinctly, and with the proper emphasis, be their voices ever so bad. Had Roscius spoken quick, thick, and ungracefully, I will answer for it, that Cicero would not have thought him worth the oration which he made in his favour. Words were given us to communicate our ideas by, and there must be something inconceivably absurd in uttering them in such a manner, as that either people cannot understand them, or will not desire to understand them. I tell you truly and sincerely, that I shall judge of your parts by your speaking gracefully or ungracefully. If you have parts, you will never be at rest till you have brought yourself to a habit of speaking most gracefully: for I aver, that it is in your power. You will desire Mr. Harte, that you may read aloud to him every day, and that he will interrupt and correct you every time that you read too fast, do not observe the proper stops, or lay a wrong emphasis. You will take care to open your teeth when you speak; to articulate very distinctly; and to beg of Mr. Harte, Mr. Eliot, or whomever you speak to, to remind and stop you, if ever you fall into the rapid and unintelligible mutter. You will even read aloud to yourself, and tune your utterance to your own ear, and read at

first much slower than you need to do, in order to correct yourself of that shameful trick of speaking faster than you ought. In short, if you think right, you will make it your business, your study, and your pleasure to speak well. Therefore, what I have said in this and in my last, is more than sufficient, if you have sense; and ten times more would not be sufficient if you have not: so here I rest it.

To the same

Keeping accounts

London, 10 *Jan.* o.s. 1749.

Dear Boy,

I have received your letter of the 31st December, n.s. Your thanks for my present, as you call it, exceed the value of the present; but the use which you assure me that you will make of it, is the thanks which I desire to receive. Due attention to the inside of books, and due contempt for the outside, is the proper relation between a man of sense and his books.

Now that you are going a little more into the world, I will take this occasion to explain my intentions as to your future expenses, that you may know what you have to expect from me, and make your plan accordingly. I shall neither deny nor grudge you any money that may be necessary for either your improvement or pleasures; I mean the pleasures of a rational being. Under the head of improvement I mean the best books, and the best masters, cost what they will; I also mean all the expense of lodgings, coach, dress, servants, &c.,

which, according to the several places where you may be, shall be respectively necessary to enable you to keep the best company. Under the head of rational pleasures I comprehend, first, proper charities to real and compassionate objects of it; secondly, proper presents to those to whom you are obliged, or whom you desire to oblige; thirdly, a conformity of expense to that of the company which you keep; as in public spectacles, your share of little entertainments, a few pistoles at games of mere commerce, and other incidental calls of good company. The only two articles which I will never supply are, the profusion of low riot, and the idle lavishness of negligence and laziness. A fool squanders away, without credit or advantage to himself, more than a man of sense spends with both. The latter employs his money as he does his time, and never spends a shilling of the one, nor a minute of the other, but in something that is either useful or rationally pleasing to himself or others. The former buys whatever he does not want, and does not pay for what he does want. He cannot withstand the charms of a toy-shop; snuff-boxes, watches, heads of canes, etc., are his destruction. His servants and tradesmen conspire with his own indolence to cheat him, and in a very little time he is astonished, in the midst of all the ridiculous superfluities, to find himself in want of all the real comforts and necessaries of life. Without care and method the largest fortune will not, and with them almost the smallest will, supply all necessary expenses. As far as you can possibly, pay ready money for everything you buy, and avoid bills. Pay that money too yourself, and not through the hands of any servant, who always

either stipulates poundage, or requires a present for his good word, as they call it. Where you must have bills, (as for meat and drink, clothes, etc.) pay them regularly every month, and with your own hand. Never, from a mistaken economy, buy a thing you do not want, because it is cheap; or from a silly pride, because it is dear. Keep an account in a book, of all that you receive, and of all that you pay; for no man, who knows what he receives and what he pays, ever runs out. I do not mean that you should keep an account of the shillings and half-crowns which you may spend in chair-hire, operas, etc. They are unworthy of the time, and of the ink that they would consume; leave such *minutiae* to dull, penny-wise fellows; but remember in economy, as well as in every other part of life, to have the proper attention to proper objects, and the proper contempt for little ones. A strong mind sees things in their true proportion; a weak one views them through a magnifying medium, which, like the microscope, makes an elephant of a flea; magnifies all little objects, but cannot receive great ones. I have known many a man pass for a miser, by saving a penny, and wrangling for two-pence, who was undoing himself at the same time; by living above his income, and not attending to essential articles, which were above his *portée*. The sure characteristic of a sound and strong mind is, to find in everything those certain bounds, *quos ultra citrave nequit consistere rectum*. These boundaries are marked out by a very fine line, which only good sense and attention can discover; it is much too fine for vulgar eyes. In manners, this line is good-breeding; beyond it, is troublesome ceremony;

short of it, is unbecoming negligence and inattention. In morals, it divides ostentatious puritanism from criminal relaxation; in religion, superstition from impiety; and, in short, every virtue from its kindred vice or weakness. I think you have sense enough to discover the line; keep it always in your eye, and learn to walk upon it; rest upon Mr. Harte, and he will poise you, till you are able to go alone. By the way, there are fewer people who walk well upon that line, than upon the slack-rope; and, therefore, a good performer shines so much the more. . . .

Remember to take the best dancing-master at Berlin, more to teach you to sit, stand, and walk gracefully, than to dance finely. The graces, the graces; remember the graces! Adieu.

To the same

A father's example

London, 7 *Feb.* o.s. 1749.

Dear Boy,

You are now come to an age capable of reflection; and I hope you will do, what however few people at your age do, exert it, for your own sake, in the search of truth and sound knowledge. I will confess (for I am not unwilling to discover my secrets to you) that it is not many years since I have presumed to reflect for myself. Till sixteen or seventeen I had no reflection, and for many years after that I made no use of what I had. I adopted the notions of the books I read, or the company I kept, without examining whether they were just or not; and I rather chose to run the

risk of easy error, than to take the time and trouble of investigating truth. Thus, partly from laziness, partly from dissipation, and partly from the *mauvaise honte* of rejecting fashionable notions, I was (as I since found) hurried away by prejudices, instead of being guided by reason; and quietly cherished error, instead of seeking for truth. But since I have taken the trouble of reasoning for myself, and have had the courage to own that I do so, you cannot imagine how much my notions of things are altered, and in how different a light I now see them, from that in which I formerly viewed them through the deceitful medium of prejudice or authority. Nay, I may possibly still retain many errors, which, from long habit, have perhaps grown into real opinions; for it is very difficult to distinguish habits, early acquired and long entertained, from the result of our reason and reflection.

My first prejudice (for I do not mention the prejudices of boys and women, such as hobgoblins, ghosts, dreams, spilling salt, &c.) was my classical enthusiasm, which I received from the books I read, and the masters who explained them to me. I was convinced there had been no common sense nor common honesty in the world for these last fifteen hundred years; but that they were totally extinguished with the ancient Greek and Roman governments. Homer and Virgil could have no faults, because they were ancient; Milton and Tasso could have no merit, because they were modern. And I could almost have said, with regard to the ancients, what Cicero, very absurdly and unbecomingly for a philosopher, says with regard to Plato, *Cum quo errare malim*

quam cum aliis recte sentire. Whereas now, without any extraordinary effort of genius, I have discovered that nature was the same three thousand years ago as it is at present; that men were but men then as well as now; that modes and customs vary often, but that human nature is always the same. And I can no more suppose, that men were better, braver, or wiser, fifteen hundred or three thousand years ago, than I can suppose that the animals or vegetables were better then than they are now. I dare assert too, in defiance of the favourers of the ancients, that Homer's hero Achilles was both a brute and a scoundrel, and consequently an improper character for the hero of an epic poem; he had so little regard for his country, that he would not act in defence of it, because he had quarrelled with Agamemnon about a — —; and then afterwards, animated by private resentment only, he went about killing people basely, I will call it, because he knew himself invulnerable; and yet, invulnerable as he was, he wore the strongest armour in the world; which I humbly apprehend to be a blunder; for a horseshoe clapped to his vulnerable heel would have been sufficient. On the other hand, with submission to the favourers of the moderns, I assert with Mr. Dryden, that the Devil is in truth the hero of Milton's poem: his plan, which he lays, pursues, and at last executes, being the subject of the poem. From all which considerations I impartially conclude that the ancients had their excellencies and their defects, their virtues and their vices, just like the moderns: pedantry and affectation of learning clearly decide in favour of the former; vanity and ignorance, as

peremptorily, in favour of the latter. Religious prejudices kept pace with my classical ones; and there was a time when I thought it impossible for the honestest man in the world to be saved, out of the pale of the Church of England: not considering that matters of opinion do not depend upon the will; and that it is as natural, and as allowable, that another man should differ in opinion from me, as that I should differ from him; and that, if we are both sincere, we are both blameless, and should consequently have mutual indulgences for each other.

The next prejudices I adopted were those of the *beau monde*, in which, as I was determined to shine, I took what are commonly called the genteel vices to be necessary. I had heard them reckoned so, and without further inquiry, I believed it; or at least should have been ashamed to have denied it, for fear of exposing myself to the ridicule of those whom I considered as the models of fine gentlemen. But now I am neither ashamed nor afraid to assert, that those genteel vices, as they are falsely called, are only so many blemishes in the character of even a man of the world, and what is called a fine gentleman, and degrade him in the opinion of those very people, to whom he hopes to recommend himself by them. Nay, this prejudice often extends so far, that I have known people pretend to vices they had not, instead of carefully concealing those they had.

Use and assert your own reason; reflect, examine, and analyze everything, in order to form a sound and mature judgement; let no *οὗτος ἔφα* impose upon your understanding, mislead your actions, or dictate your conversation. Be early

what, if you are not, you will when too late wish you had been. Consult your reason betimes: I do not say, that it will always prove an unerring guide; for human reason is not infallible; but it will prove the least erring guide that you can follow. Books and conversation may assist it; but adopt neither, blindly and implicitly: try both by that best rule which God has given to direct us, reason. Of all the troubles, do not decline, as many people do, that of thinking.

TO THE SAME

Public speaking

London, 9 *Dec.* O.S. 1749.

DEAR BOY,

It is now above forty years since I have never spoken nor written one single word, without giving myself at least one moment's time to consider, whether it was a good one or a bad one, and whether I could not find out a better in its place. An unharmonious and rugged period, at this time, shocks my ears; and I, like all the rest of the world, will willingly exchange and give up some degree of rough sense, for a good degree of pleasing sound. I will freely and truly own to you, without either vanity or false modesty, that whatever reputation I have acquired as a speaker, is more owing to my constant attention to my diction than to my matter, which was necessarily just the same as other people's. When you come into parliament, your reputation as a speaker will depend much more upon your words, and your periods than upon the subject. The same matter

occurs equally to everybody of common sense, upon the same question: the dressing it well, is what excites the attention and admiration of the audience.

It is in parliament that I have set my heart upon your making a figure; it is there that I want to have you justly proud of yourself, and to make me justly proud of you. This means that you must be a good speaker there; I use the word *must*, because I know you may if you will. The vulgar, who are always mistaken, look upon a speaker and a comet with the same astonishment and admiration, taking them both for preternatural phenomena. This error discourages many young men from attempting that character; and good speakers are willing to have their talent considered as something very extraordinary, if not a peculiar gift of God to his elect. But, let you and I analyze and simplify this good speaker; let us strip him of those adventitious plumes with which his own pride and the ignorance of others have decked him; and we shall find the true definition of him to be no more than this: a man of good common sense, who reasons justly, and expresses himself elegantly, on that subject upon which he speaks. There is, surely, no witchcraft in this. A man of sense, without a superior and astonishing degree of parts, will not talk nonsense upon any subject; nor will he, if he has the least taste or application, talk inelegantly. What then does all this mighty art and mystery of speaking in parliament amount to? Why, no more than this, that the man who speaks in the House of Commons, speaks in that house, and to four hundred people, that opinion upon a given subject

which he would make no difficulty of speaking in any house in England, round the fire, or at table, to any fourteen people whatsoever; better judges, perhaps, and severer critics of what he says, than any fourteen gentlemen of the House of Commons.

I have spoken frequently in parliament, and not always without some applause; and therefore I can assure you, from my experience, that there is very little in it. The elegancy of the style and the turn of the periods make the chief impression upon the hearers. Give them but one or two round and harmonious periods in a speech, which they will retain and repeat, and they will go home as well satisfied as people do from an opera, humming all the way one or two favourite tunes that have struck their ears, and were easily caught. Most people have ears, but few have judgement; tickle those ears, and, depend upon it, you will catch their judgements, such as they are.

Cicero, conscious that he was at the top of his profession (for in his time eloquence was a profession), in order to set himself off, defines, in his treatise *de Oratore*, an orator to be such a man as never was, or never will be; and, by this fallacious argument, says that he must know every art and science whatsoever, or how shall he speak upon them? But with submission to so great an authority, my definition of an orator is extremely different from, and I believe much truer than, his. I call that man an orator who reasons justly, and expresses himself elegantly, upon whatever subjects he treats. Problems in geometry, equations in algebra, processes in chemistry, and experiments in anatomy, are never, that I have heard of, the objects of eloquence;

and therefore I humbly conceive that a man may be a very fine speaker, and yet know nothing of geometry, algebra, chemistry, or anatomy. The subjects of all parliamentary debates are subjects of common sense singly.

Thus I write whatever occurs to me, that I think may contribute either to form or inform you. May my labour not be in vain! and it will not, if you will but have half the concern for yourself that I have for you. Adieu.

To the same

The new Earl of Chatham

Blackheath, 1 *Aug.* 1766.

My dear Friend,

The curtain was at last drawn up, the day before yesterday, and discovered the new actors together with some of the old ones. I do not name them to you, because to-morrow's Gazette will do it full as well as I could. Mr. Pitt, who had *carte blanche* given him, named every one of them: but what would you think he named himself for? Lord Privy Seal; and (what will astonish you, as it does every mortal here) Earl of Chatham. The joke here is, that he has had *a fall upstairs*, and has done himself so much hurt, that he will never be able to stand upon his legs again. Everybody is puzzled how to account for this step; though it would not be the first time that great abilities have been duped by low cunning. But be it what it will, he is now certainly only Earl of Chatham; and no longer Mr. Pitt, in any respect whatever. Such an event, I believe,

was never read nor heard of. To withdraw, in the fullness of his power, and in the utmost gratification of his ambition, from the House of Commons, (which procured him his power, and which could alone ensure it to him) and to go into that hospital of incurables, the House of Lords, is a measure so unaccountable, that nothing but proof positive could have made me believe it: but true it is. Hans Stanley is to go ambassador to Russia; and my nephew, Ellis, to Spain, decorated with the red ribband. Lord Shelburne is your secretary of state, which I suppose he has notified to you this post by a circular letter. Charles Townshend has now the sole management of the House of Commons; but how long he will be content to be only Lord Chatham's vicegerent there, is a question which I will not pretend to decide. There is one very bad sign for Lord Chatham in his new dignity; which is, that all his enemies, without exception, rejoice at it; and all his friends are stupefied and dumb-founded. If I mistake not much, he will in the course of a year enjoy perfect *otium cum dignitate.* Enough of politics.

Is the fair, or at least the fat Miss C—— with you still? It must be confessed that she knows the art of courts, to be so received at Dresden and so connived at in Leicester-fields.

There never was so wet a summer as this has been, in the memory of man; we have not had one single day, since March, without some rain; but most days a great deal. I hope that does not affect your health, as great cold does; for with all these inundations it has not been cold. God bless you!

SAMUEL JOHNSON

1709-1784

To Bennet Langton

Postponement of a visit

6 *May*, 1755.

Sir,

It has been long observed, that men do not suspect faults which they do not commit; your own elegance of manners, and punctuality of complaisance, did not suffer you to impute to me that negligence of which I was guilty, and [for] which I have not since atoned. I received both your letters, and received them with pleasure proportioned to the esteem which so short an acquaintance strongly impressed, and which I hope to confirm by nearer knowledge, though I am afraid that gratification will be for a time withheld.

I have, indeed, published my book, of which I beg to know your father's judgment, and yours; and I have now stayed long enough to watch its progress in the world. It has, you see, no patrons, and I think has yet had no opponents, except the critics of the coffee-house, whose outcries are soon dispersed into the air, and are thought on no more. From this, therefore, I am at liberty, and think of taking the opportunity of this interval to make an excursion, and why not then into Lincolnshire? or, to mention a stronger attraction, why not to dear Mr. Langton? I will give the true reason, which I know you will approve:—I have a mother more than eighty years old, who has counted the days

to the publication of my book, in hopes of seeing me; and to her, if I can disengage myself here, I resolve to go.

As I know, dear sir, that to delay my visit for a reason like this will not deprive me of your esteem, I beg it may not lessen your kindness. I have very seldom received an offer of friendship which I so earnestly desire to cultivate and mature. I shall rejoice to hear from you, till I can see you, and will see you as soon as I can; for when the duty that calls me to Lichfield is discharged, my inclination will carry me to Langton. I shall delight to hear the ocean roar, or see the stars twinkle, in the company of men to whom Nature does not spread her volumes or utter her voice in vain.

Do not, dear sir, make the slowness of this letter a precedent for delay, or imagine that I approved the incivility that I have committed; for I have known you enough to love you, and sincerely to wish a further knowledge; and I assure you once more, that to live in a house that contains such a father and such a son, will be accounted a very uncommon degree of pleasure by, dear sir, your most obliged and most humble servant.

To Miss Porter

A mother's death

23 *Jan.* 1759.

You will conceive my sorrow for the loss of my mother, of the best mother. If she were to live again, surely I should behave better to her. But she is happy, and what is past is nothing to her;

and for me, since I cannot repair my faults to her, I hope repentance will efface them. I return you and all those that have been good to her my sincerest thanks, and pray God to repay you all with infinite advantage. Write to me and comfort me, dear child. I shall be glad likewise, if Kitty will write to me. I shall send a bill of twenty pounds in a few days, which I thought to have brought to my mother; but God suffered it not. I have not power or composure to say much more. God bless you, and bless us all.

To Joseph Baretti

A letter of counsel

21 *Dec.* 1762.

Sir,

You are not to suppose, with all your conviction of my idleness, that I have passed all this time without writing to my Baretti. I gave a letter to Mr. Beauclerk, who, in my opinion, and in his own, was hastening to Naples for the recovery of his health; but he has stopped at Paris, and I know not when he will proceed. Langton is with him.

I will not trouble you with speculations about peace and war. The good or ill success of battles and embassies extends itself to a very small part of domestic life: we all have good and evil, which we feel more sensibly than our petty part of public miscarriage or prosperity. I am sorry for your disappointment, with which you seem more touched than I should expect a man of your resolution and experience to have been, did I not

know that general truths are seldom applied to particular occasions; so that the fallacy of our self-love extends itself as wide as our interest and affections. Every man believes that mistresses are unfaithful, and patrons capricious; but he excepts his own mistress and his own patron. We have all learned that greatness is negligent and contemptuous, and that in courts, life is often languished away in ungratified expectation; but he that approaches greatness, or glitters in a court, imagines that destiny has at last exempted him from the common lot.

Do not let such evils overwhelm you as thousands have suffered and thousands have surmounted; but turn your thoughts with vigour to some other plan of life, and keep always in your mind that, with due submission to Providence, a man of genius has been seldom ruined but by himself. Your patron's weakness or insensibility will finally do you little hurt, if he is not assisted by your own passions. Of your love I know not the propriety, nor can estimate the power; but in love, as in every other passion, of which hope is the essence, we ought always to remember the uncertainty of events. There is indeed nothing that so much seduces reason from her vigilance, as the thought of passing life with an amiable woman; and if all would happen that a lover fancies, I know not what other terrestrial happiness would deserve pursuit. But love and marriage are different states. Those who are to suffer the evils together, and to suffer often for the sakes of one another, soon lose that tenderness of look and that benevolence of mind which arose from the participation of unmingled pleasure and successive amusement.

A woman we are sure will not be always fair, we are not sure she will always be virtuous; and man cannot retain through life that respect and assiduity by which he pleases for a day or for a month. I do not however pretend to have discovered that life has anything more to be desired than a prudent and virtuous marriage; therefore know not what counsel to give you.

If you can quit your imagination of love and greatness, and leave your hopes of preferment and bridal raptures to try once more the fortune of literature and industry, the way through France is now open. We flatter ourselves that we shall cultivate with great diligence the arts of peace; and every man will be welcome among us who can teach us anything we do not know. For your part, you will find all your old friends willing to receive you. . . .

To Mrs. Thrale

Travel in Scotland

Skye, 21 *Sept.* 1773.

Dearest Madam,

I am so vexed at the necessity of sending yesterday so short a letter, that I purpose to get a long letter beforehand by writing something every day, which I may the more easily do, as a cold makes me now too deaf to take the usual pleasure in conversation. Lady Macleod is very good to me, and the place at which we now are, is equal in strength of situation, in the wildness of the adjacent country, and in the plenty and

elegance of the domestic entertainment, to a castle in Gothic romances. The sea with a little island is before us; cascades play within view. Close to the house is the formidable skeleton of an old castle probably Danish, and the whole mass of building stands upon a protuberance of rock, inaccessible till of late but by a pair of stairs on the sea side, and secure in ancient times against any enemy that was likely to invade the kingdom of Skye.

Macleod has offered me an island; if it were not too far off I should hardly refuse it: my island would be pleasanter than Brighthelmstone, if you and my master could come to it; but I cannot think it pleasant to live quite alone.

Oblitusque meorum, obliviscendus et illis.

That I should be elated by the dominion of an island to forgetfulness of my friends at Streatham I cannot believe, and I hope never to deserve that they should be willing to forget me.

It has happened that I have been often recognised in my journey where I did not expect it. At Aberdeen I found one of my acquaintance professor of physic; turning aside to dine with a country gentleman, I was owned at table by one who had seen me at a philosophical lecture; at Macdonald's I was claimed by a naturalist, who wanders about the islands to pick up curiosities; and I had once in London attracted the notice of Lady Macleod. I will now go on with my account.

The Highland girl made tea, and looked and talked not inelegantly; her father was by no means an ignorant or a weak man; there were

books in the cottage, among which were some volumes of Prideaux's *Connection*: this man's conversation we were glad of while we stayed. He had been *out*, as they call it, in forty-five, and still retained his old opinions. He was going to America, because his rent was raised beyond what he thought himself able to pay.

At night our beds were made, but we had some difficulty in persuading ourselves to lie down in them, though we had put on our own sheets; at last we ventured, and I slept very soundly in the vale of Glen Morrison, amidst the rocks and mountains. Next morning our landlord liked us so well, that he walked some miles with us for our company, through a country so wild and barren that the proprietor does not, with all his pressure upon his tenants, raise more than four hundred pounds a year for near one hundred square miles or sixty thousand acres. He let us know that he had forty head of black cattle, an hundred goats, and an hundred sheep, upon a farm that he remembered let at five pounds a year, but for which he now paid twenty. He told us some stories of their march into England. At last he left us, and we went forward, winding among mountains, sometimes green and sometimes naked, commonly so steep as not easily to be climbed by the greatest vigour and activity: our way was often crossed by little rivulets, and we were entertained with small streams trickling from the rocks, which after heavy rains must be tremendous torrents.

About noon we came to a small glen, so they call a valley, which compared with other places appeared rich and fertile; here our guides desired us to stop, that the horses might graze, for the

journey was very laborious, and no more grass would be found. We made no difficulty of compliance, and I sat down to take notes on a green bank, with a small stream running at my feet, in the midst of savage solitude, with mountains before me, and on either hand covered with heath. I looked around me, and wondered that I was not more affected, but the mind is not at all times equally ready to be put in motion; if my mistress and master and Queeny had been there we should have produced some reflections among us, either poetical or philosophical, for though *solitude be the nurse of woe*, conversation is often the parent of remarks and discoveries.

In about an hour we remounted, and pursued our journey. The lake by which we had travelled for some time ended in a river, which we passed by a bridge, and came to another glen, with a collection of huts, called Auknashealds; the huts were generally built of clods of earth, held together by the intertexture of vegetable fibres, of which earth there are great levels in Scotland which they call mosses. Moss in Scotland is bog in Ireland, and moss-trooper is bog-trotter: there was, however, one hut built of loose stones, piled up with great thickness into a strong though not solid wall. From this house we obtained some great pails of milk, and having brought bread with us, were very liberally regaled. The inhabitants, a very coarse tribe, ignorant of any language but Erse, gathered so fast about us, that if we had not had Highlanders with us, they might have caused more alarm than pleasure; they are called the Clan of Macrae.

We had been told that nothing gratified the

Highlanders so much as snuff and tobacco, and had accordingly stored ourselves with both at Fort Augustus. Boswell opened his treasure, and gave them each a piece of tobacco roll. We had more bread than we could eat for the present, and were more liberal than provident. Boswell cut it in slices, and gave them an opportunity of tasting wheaten bread for the first time. I then got some halfpence for a shilling, and made up the deficiencies of Boswell's distribution, who had given some money among the children. We then directed that the mistress of the stone house should be asked what we must pay her: she, who perhaps had never before sold anything but cattle, knew not, I believe, well what to ask, and referred herself to us: we obliged her to make some demand, and one of the Highlanders settled the account with her at a shilling. One of the men advised her, with the cunning that clowns never can be without, to ask more; but she said that a shilling was enough. We gave her half a crown, and she offered part of it again. The Macraes were so well pleased with our behaviour, that they declared it the best day they had seen since the time of the old Laird of Macleod, who, I suppose, like us, stopped in their valley, as he was travelling to Skye. . . .

I cannot forbear to interrupt my narrative. Boswell, with some of his troublesome kindness, has informed this family and reminded me that the 18th of September is my birthday. The return of my birthday, if I remember it, fills me with thoughts which it seems to be the general care of humanity to escape. I can now look back upon three score and four years, in which little has

been done, and little has been enjoyed; a life diversified by misery, spent part in the sluggishness of penury, and part under the violence of pain, in gloomy discontent or importunate distress. But perhaps I am better than I should have been if I had been less afflicted. With this I will try to be content.

In proportion as there is less pleasure in retrospective considerations, the mind is more disposed to wander forward into futurity; but at sixty-four what promises, however liberal, of imaginary good can futurity venture to make? Yet something will be always promised and some promises will always be credited. I am hoping and I am praying that I may live better in the time to come, whether long or short, than I have yet lived, and in the solace of that hope endeavour to repose. Dear Queeny's day is next, I hope she at sixty-four will have less to regret. . . .

You will now expect that I should give you some account of the Isle of Skye, of which, though I have been twelve days upon it, I have little to say. It is an island perhaps fifty miles long, so much indented by inlets of the sea that there is no part of it removed from the water more than six miles. No part that I have seen is plain; you are always climbing or descending, and every step is upon rock or mire. A walk upon ploughed ground in England is a dance upon carpets compared to the toilsome drudgery of wandering in Skye. There is neither town nor village in the island, nor have I seen any house but Macleod's, that is not much below your habitation at Brighthelmstone. In the mountains there are stags and roebucks, but no hares, and few rabbits; nor have

I seen anything that interested me as a zoologist, except an otter, bigger than I thought an otter could have been.

You perhaps are imagining that I am withdrawn from the gay and the busy world into regions of peace and pastoral felicity, and am enjoying the relics of the golden age; that I am surveying nature's magnificence from a mountain, or remarking her minuter beauties on the flowery bank of a winding rivulet; that I am invigorating myself in the sunshine, or delighting my imagination with being hidden from the invasion of human evils and human passions in the darkness of a thicket; that I am busy in gathering shells and pebbles on the shore, or contemplative on a rock, from which I look upon the water, and consider how many waves are rolling between me and Streatham.

The use of travelling is to regulate imagination by reality, and instead of thinking how things may be, to see them as they are. Here are mountains which I should once have climbed, but to climb steps is now very laborious, and to descend them dangerous; and I am now content with knowing, that by scrambling up a rock, I shall only see other rocks, and a wider circuit of barren desolation. Of streams, we have here a sufficient number, but they murmur not upon pebbles, but upon rocks. Of flowers, if Chloris herself were here, I could present her only with the bloom of heath. Of lawns and thickets, he must read that would know them, for here is little sun and no shade. On the sea I look from my window, but am not much tempted to the shore; for since I came to this island, almost every breath of air has been a storm, and what is worse, a storm with all its severity,

but without its magnificence, for the sea is here so broken into channels that there is not a sufficient volume of water either for lofty surges or a loud roar. . . .

To the Right Honourable the Earl of Chesterfield

Patronage

7 *Feb.* 1775.

My Lord,

I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of *The World*, that two papers, in which my *Dictionary* is recommended to the public, are by your lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre* ;—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending ; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all I could ; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my lord, have now passed, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed

from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

The shepherd in *Virgil* grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity, not to confess obligations, where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I shall conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most humble,

most obedient servant.

To James Boswell

A silent friend

13 *July*, 1779.

Dear Sir,

What can possibly have happened that keeps us two such strangers to each other? I expected to have heard from you when you came home; I expected afterwards. I went into the country and returned, and yet there is no letter from Mr. Boswell. No ill, I hope, has happened; and if ill should happen, why should it be concealed from him who loves you? Is it a fit of humour, that has disposed you to try who can hold out longest without writing? If it be, you have the victory. But I am afraid of something bad; set me free from my suspicions.

My thoughts are at present employed in guessing the reason of your silence; you must not expect that I should tell you anything, if I had anything to tell. Write, pray write to me, and let me know what is or what has been the cause of this long interruption.

To Mrs. Thrale

A great man's fortitude

19 *June*, 1783.

On Monday the 16th, I sat for my picture and walked a considerable way with little inconvenience. In the afternoon and evening I felt myself light and easy, and began to plan schemes of life. Thus I went to bed, and in a short time

waked and sat up, as has been long my custom, when I felt a confusion and indistinctness in my head, which lasted, I suppose, about half a minute. I was alarmed, and prayed God, that however he might afflict my body, he would spare my understanding. This prayer, that I might try the integrity of my faculties, I made in Latin verse. The lines were not very good, but I knew them not to be very good: I made them easily, and concluded myself to be unimpaired in my faculties.

Soon after I perceived that I had suffered a paralytic stroke, and that my speech was taken from me. I had no pain, and so little dejection in this dreadful state, that I wondered at my own apathy, and considered that perhaps death itself, when it should come, would excite less horror than seems now to attend it.

In order to rouse the vocal organs, I took two drams. Wine has been celebrated for the production of eloquence. I put myself into violent motion, and I think repeated it; but all was vain. I then went to bed, and strange as it may seem, I slept. When I saw light, it was time to contrive what I should do. Though God stopped my speech, he left me my hands; I enjoyed a mercy which was not granted to my dear friend Lawrence, who now perhaps overlooks me as I am writing, and rejoices that I have what he wanted. My first note was necessarily to my servant, who came in talking, and could not immediately comprehend why he should read what I put into his hands. I then wrote a card to Mr. Allen, that I might have a discreet friend at hand, to act as occasion should require. In penning this note I had some difficulty; my hand, I knew not how

nor why, made wrong letters. I then wrote to Dr. Taylor to come to me, and bring Dr. Heberden: and I sent to Dr. Brocklesby, who is my neighbour. My physicians are very friendly, and give me great hopes; but you may imagine my situation. I have so far recovered my vocal powers, as to repeat the Lord's Prayer with no very imperfect articulation. My memory, I hope, yet remains as it was! but such an attack produces solicitude for the safety of every faculty.

LAURENCE STERNE

1713-1768

To Miss Lumley

The disconsolate lover

[1740-1.]

You bid me tell you, my dear L., how I bore your departure for S——, and whether the valley, where D'Estella stands, retains still its looks, or if I think the roses or jessamines smell as sweet as when you left it. Alas! everything has now lost its relish and look! The hour you left D'Estella I took to my bed. I was worn out with fevers of all kinds, but most by that fever of the heart with which thou knowest well I have been wasting these two years—and shall continue wasting till you quit S——. The good Miss S——, from the forebodings of the best of hearts, thinking I was ill, insisted upon my going to her. What can be the cause, my dear L., that I never have been able to see the face of this mutual friend, but I feel myself rent to pieces? She made me stay an hour with her, and in that short space I burst into tears a dozen different times, and in such affectionate gusts of passion, that she was constrained to leave the room, and sympathize in her dressing-room. I have been weeping for you both, said she, in a tone of the sweetest pity—for poor L.'s heart, I have long known it—her anguish is as sharp as yours—her heart as tender—her constancy as great—her virtues as heroic—Heaven

brought you not together to be tormented. I could only answer her with a kind look, and a heavy sigh, and returned home to your lodgings (which I have hired till your return) to resign myself to misery. Fanny had prepared me a supper—she is all attention to me—but I sat over it with tears; a bitter sauce, my L., but I could eat it with no other; for the moment she began to spread my little table, my heart fainted within me. One solitary plate, one knife. one fork, one glass! I gave a thousand pensive, penetrating looks at the chair thou hadst so often graced, in those quiet and sentimental repasts, then laid down my knife and fork, and took out my handkerchief, and clapped it across my face, and wept like a child. I could do so this very moment, my L.; for, as I take up my pen, my poor pulse quickens, my pale face glows, and tears are trickling down upon the paper, as I trace the word L——. O thou! blessed in thyself, and in thy virtues, blessed to all that know thee—to me most so, because more do I know of thee than all thy sex. This is the philtre, my L., by which thou hast charmed me, and by which thou wilt hold me thine, while virtue and faith hold this world together. This, my friend, is the plain and simple magic, by which I told Miss —— I have won a place in that heart of thine, on which I depend so satisfied, that time, or distance, or change of everything which might alarm the hearts of little men, create no uneasy suspense in mine. Wast thou to stay in S—— these seven years, thy friend, though he would grieve, scorns to doubt, or to be doubted—'tis the only exception where security is not the parent of danger.

I told you poor Fanny was all attention to me since your departure—contrives every day bringing in the name of L. She told me last night (upon giving me some hartshorn), she had observed my illness began the very day of your departure for S—— ; that I had never held up my head, had seldom, or scarce ever, smiled, had fled from all society; that she verily believed I was broken-hearted, for she had never entered the room, or passed by the door, but she heard me sigh heavily; that I neither eat, or slept, or took pleasure in anything as before. Judge then, my L., can the valley look so well, or the roses and jessamines smell so sweet as heretofore? Ah me! but adieu—the vesper bell calls me from thee to my GOD.

To David Garrick

Le chevalier Shandy

Paris, 19 *March*, 1762.

Dear Garrick,

This will be put into your hands by Dr. Shippen, a physician, who has been here some time with Miss Poyntz, and is at this moment setting out for your metropolis; so I snatch the opportunity of writing to you and my kind friend Mrs. Garrick. I see nothing like her here, and yet I have been introduced to one half of their best Goddesses, and in a month more shall be admitted to the shrines of the other half; but I neither worship or fall (much) on my knees before them; but, on the contrary, have converted many unto Shandeism; for be it known, I Shandy it away fifty times more than I was ever wont, talk more

nonsense than ever you heard me talk in your days—and to all sorts of people. *Qui le diable est cet homme-là*—said Choiseul t'other day—*ce chevalier Shandy?* You'll think me as vain as a devil, was I to tell you the rest of the dialogue; whether the bearer knows it or no, I know not. 'T will serve up after supper, in Southampton-street, amongst other small dishes, after the fatigues of Richard III. O God! they have nothing here, which gives the nerves so smart a blow, as those great characters in the hands of Garrick! but I forgot I am writing to the man himself. The devil take (as he will) these transports of enthusiasm! Apropos, the whole city of Paris is *bewitched* with the comic opera, and if it was not for the affair of the Jesuits, which takes up one half of our talk, the comic opera would have it all. It is a tragical nuisance in all companies as it is, and was it not for some sudden starts and dashes of Shandeism, which now and then either break the thread, or entangle it so, that the devil himself would be puzzled in winding it off, I should die a martyr—this by the way I never will.

I send you over some of these comic operas by the bearer, with the *Sallon,* a satire. The French comedy, I seldom visit it—they act scarce in anything but tragedies —and the Clairon is great, and Mlle. Dumesnil, in some places, still greater than her; yet I cannot bear preaching—I fancy I got a surfeit of it in my younger days. There is a tragedy to be damned to-night—peace be with it, and the gentle brain which made it! I have ten thousand things to tell you I cannot write, I do a thousand things which cut no figure, *but in the doing*—and as in London, I have the honour of

having done and said a thousand things I never did or dreamed of—and yet I dream abundantly. If the devil stood behind me in the shape of a courier, I could not write faster than I do, having five letters more to dispatch by the same gentleman; he is going into another section of the globe, and when he has seen you, will depart in peace.

The Duke of Orleans has suffered my portrait to be added to the number of some odd men in his collection; and a gentleman who lives with him has taken it most expressively, at full length: I purpose to obtain an etching of it, and to send it you. Your prayer for me of *rosy health* is heard. If I stay here for three or four months, I shall return more than reinstated. My love to Mrs. Garrick.

To Mr. Foley at Paris

An adventure on the road

Toulouse, 14 *Aug.* 1762.

My dear Foley,

After many turnings (*alias* digressions), to say nothing of downright overthrows, stops, and delays, we have arrived in three weeks at Toulouse, and are now settled in our houses with servants, &c., about us, and look as composed as if we had been here seven years. In our journey we suffered so much from the heats, it gives me pain to remember it; I never saw a cloud from Paris to Nismes half as broad as a twenty-four sols piece. Good God! we were toasted, roasted, grilled, stewed and carbonaded on one side or other all the way; and being all done enough (*assez cuits*) in the day,

we were eat up at night by bugs, and other unswept-out vermin, the legal inhabitants (if length of possession gives right) of every inn we lay at. Can you conceive a worse accident than that in such a journey, in the hottest day and hour of it, four miles from either tree or shrub which could cast a shade of the size of one of Eve's fig leaves, that we should break a hind wheel into ten thousand pieces, and be obliged in consequence to sit five hours on a gravelly road, without one drop of water, or possibility of getting any? To mend the matter, my two postillions were two dough-hearted fools, and fell a-crying. Nothing was to be done! By heaven, quoth I, pulling off my coat and waist-coat, something shall be done, for I'll thrash you both within an inch of your lives, and then make you take each of you a horse, and ride like two devils to the next post for a cart to carry my baggage, and a wheel to carry ourselves. Our luggage weighed ten quintals. It was the fair of Baucaire, all the world was going, or returning; we were asked by every soul who passed by us, if we were going to the fair of Baucaire. No wonder, quoth I, we have goods enough! *vous avez raison, mes amis. . . .*

THOMAS GRAY

1716–1771

To Richard West

Scenery at Tivoli

Tivoli, 20 *May*, 1740.

This day being in the palace of his Highness the Duke of Modena, he laid his most serene commands upon me to write to Mr. West, and said he thought it for his glory, that I should draw up an inventory of all his most serene possessions for the said West's perusal. Imprimis, a house, being in circumference a quarter of a mile, two feet and an inch; the said house containing the following particulars, to wit, a great room. Item, another great room; item, a bigger room; item, another room; item, a vast room; item, a sixth of the same; a seventh ditto; an eighth as before; a ninth as abovesaid; a tenth (see No. 1); item, ten more such, besides twenty besides, which, not to be too particular, we shall pass over. The said rooms contain nine chairs, two tables, five stools and a cricket. From whence we shall proceed to the garden, containing two millions of superfine laurel hedges, a clump of cypress trees, and half the river Teverone.—Finis. Dame Nature desired me to put in a list of her little goods and chattels, and, as they were small, to be very minute about them. She has built here three or four little mountains, and laid them out in an irregular semi-circle; from certain others

behind, at a greater distance, she has drawn a canal, into which she has put a little river of hers, called Anio; she has cut a huge cleft between the two innermost of her four hills, and there she has left it to its own disposal; which she has no sooner done, but, like a heedless chit, it tumbles headlong down a declivity fifty feet perpendicular, breaks itself all to shatters, and is converted into a shower of rain, where the sun forms many a bow, red, green, blue, and yellow. To get out of our metaphors without any further trouble, it is the most noble sight in the world. The weight of that quantity of waters, and the force they fall with, have worn the rocks they throw themselves among into a thousand irregular craggs, and to a vast depth. In this channel it goes boiling along with a mighty noise till it comes to another steep, where you see it a second time come roaring down (but first you must walk two miles farther) a greater height than before, but not with that quantity of waters; for by this time it has divided itself, being crossed and opposed by the rocks, into four several streams, each of which, in emulation of the great one, will tumble down too; and it does tumble down, but not from an equally elevated place; so that you have at one view all these cascades intermixed with groves of olive and little woods, the mountains rising behind them, and on the top of one (that which forms the extremity of one of the half-circle's horns) is seated the town itself. At the very extremity of that extremity, on the brink of the precipice, stands the Sybil's temple, the remains of a little rotunda, surrounded with its portico, above half of whose beautiful Corinthian pillars are still standing and entire;

all this on one hand. On the other, the open Campagna of Rome, here and there a little castle on a hillock, and the city itself at the very brink of the horizon, indistinctly seen (being eighteen miles off) except the dome of St. Peter's ; which, if you look out of your window, wherever you are, I suppose, you can see. I did not tell you that a little below the first fall, on the side of the rock, and hanging over that torrent, are little ruins which they show you for Horace's house, a curious situation to observe the

> Praeceps Anio et Tiburni lucus, et uda
> Mobilibus pomaria rivis.

Maecenas did not care for such a noise, it seems, and built him a house (which they also carry one to see) so situated that it sees nothing at all of the matter, and for anything he knew there might be no such river in the world. Horace had another house on the other side of the Teverone, opposite to Maecenas's ; and they told us there was a bridge of communication, by which *andava il detto Signor per trastullarsi coll' istesso Orazio.* In coming hither we crossed the Aquae Albulae, a vile little brook that stinks like a fury, and they say it has stunk so these thousand years. I forgot the Piscina of Quintilius Varus, where he used to keep certain little fishes. This is very entire, and there is a piece of the aqueduct that supplied it too ; in the garden below is old Rome, built in little, just as it was, they say. There are seven temples in it, and no houses at all ; they say there were none.

To the same

A poet's melancholy

London, 27 *May*, 1742.

Mine, you are to know is a white Melancholy, or rather Leucocholy for the most part; which, though it seldom laughs or dances, nor ever amounts to what one called Joy or Pleasure, yet is a good easy sort of a state, and *ça ne laisse que de s'amuser.* The only fault is its insipidity; which is apt now and then to give a sort of Ennui, which makes one form certain little wishes that signify nothing. But there is another sort, black indeed, which I have now and then felt, that has somewhat in it like Tertullian's rule of faith, *Credo quia impossibile est*; for it believes, nay, is sure of everything that is unlikely, so it be but frightful; and on the other hand excludes and shuts its eyes to the most possible hopes, and everything that is pleasurable; from this the Lord deliver us! for none but he and sunshiny weather can do it. In hopes of enjoying this kind of weather I am going into the country for a few weeks, but shall be never the nearer any society; so, if you have any charity, you will continue to write. My life is like Harry the Fourth's supper of Hens, 'Poulets à la broche, Poulets en Ragoût, Poulets en Hâchis, Poulets en Fricassées'. Reading here, Reading there; nothing but books with different sauces. Do not let me lose my desert then; for though that be Reading too, yet it has a very different flavour. The May seems to be come since your invitation;

and I propose to bask in her beams and dress me in her roses.

Et caput in verna semper habere rosa.

I shall see Mr. —— and his Wife, nay, and his Child, too, for he has got a Boy. Is it not odd to consider one's Cotemporaries in the grave light of Husband and Father? There is my lords Sandwich and Halifax, they are Statesmen: Do not you remember them dirty boys playing at cricket? As for me, I am never a bit the older, nor the bigger, nor the wiser than I was then: no, not for having been beyond sea. Pray, how are you?..

To Horace Walpole

The fate of Selima

Cambridge, 1 *March*, 1747.

As one ought to be particularly careful to avoid blunders in a compliment of condolence, it would be a sensible satisfaction to me (before I testify my sorrow, and the sincere part I take in your misfortune) to know for certain, who it is that I lament. I knew Zara and Selima (Selima, was it? or Fatima?) or rather I knew both of them together; for I cannot justly say which was which. Then as to your handsome Cat, the name you distinguished her by, I am no less at a loss, as well knowing one's handsome cat is always the cat one likes best; or if one be alive and the other dead, it is usually the latter that is the handsomest. Besides, if the point were never so clear, I hope you do not think me so ill-bred or so imprudent as to forfeit all my interest in the survivor; Oh no! I

would rather seem to mistake, and to be sure it must be the tabby one that had met with this sad accident. Till this affair is a little better determined, you will excuse me if I do not begin to cry :

Tempus inane peto, requiem, spatiumque doloris.

Which interval is the more convenient, as it gives time to rejoice with you on your new honours. This is only a beginning ; I reckon next week we shall hear you are a free-Mason, or a Gormorgon at least. Heigh ho ! I feel (as you to be sure have done long since) that I have very little to say, at least in prose. Somebody will be the better for it ; I do not mean you, but your Cat, feuë Mademoiselle Selime, whom I am about to immortalize for one week or fortnight, as follows.

. . . There 's a poem for you, it is rather too long for an Epitaph.

To the same

Publication of the Elegy

Cambridge, 11 *Feb.* 1751.

As you have brought me into a little sort of distress, you must assist me, I believe, to get out of it as well as I can. Yesterday I had the misfortune of receiving a letter from certain gentlemen (as their bookseller expresses it), who have taken the *Magazine of Magazines* into their hands. They tell me that an *ingenious* poem, called *Reflections in a Country Churchyard*, has been communicated to them, which they are printing forthwith ; that they are informed that the *excellent* author of it is I by name, and that they beg not only his *indulgence*, but the *honour* of his correspondence, &c.

As I am not at all disposed to be either so indulgent, or so correspondent, as they desire, I have but one bad way left to escape the honour they would inflict upon me; and, therefore, am obliged to desire you would make Dodsley print it immediately (which may be done in less than a week's time) from your copy, but without my name, in what form is most convenient for him, but on his best paper and character; he must correct the press himself, and print it without any interval between the stanzas, because the sense is in some places continued beyond them; and the title must be,—*Elegy, written in a Country Churchyard.* If he would add a line or two to say it came into his hands by accident, I should like it better. If you behold the *Magazine of Magazines* in the light that I do, you will not refuse to give yourself this trouble on my account, which you have taken of your own accord before now. If Dodsley do not do this immediately, he may as well let it alone.

To the same

At Burnham

[Burnham,] *Sept.* 1737.

I WAS hindered in my last, and so could not give you all the trouble I would have done. The description of a road, which your coach wheels have so often honoured, it would be needless to give you; suffice it that I arrived safe at my uncle's, who is a great hunter in imagination; his dogs take up every chair in the house, so I am forced to stand at this present writing; and though the gout forbids him galloping after them in the field, yet

he continues to regale his ears and nose with their comfortable noise and stink. He holds me mighty cheap, I perceive, for walking when I should ride, and reading when I should hunt. My comfort amidst.all this is, that I have at the distance of half a mile, through a green lane, a forest (the vulgar call it a common) all my own, at least as good as so, for I spy no human thing in it but myself. It is a little chaos of mountains and precipices; mountains, it is true, that do not ascend much above the clouds, nor are the declivities quite so amazing as Dover Cliff; but just such hills as people who love their necks as well as I do may venture to climb, and crags that give the eye as much pleasure as if they were more dangerous. Both vale and hill are covered with most venerable beeches, and other very reverend vegetables, that, like most other ancient people, are always dreaming out their old stories to the winds.

And as they bow their hoary tops relate,
In murm'ring sounds, the dark decrees of fate;
While visions, as poetic eyes avow,
Cling to each leaf, and swarm on every bough.

At the foot of one of these squats ME I (*il penseroso*), and there grow to the trunk for a whole morning. The timorous hare and sportive squirrel gambol round me like Adam in Paradise, before he had an Eve; but I think he did not use to read Virgil, as I commonly do there. In this situation I often converse with my Horace, aloud too, that is talk to you, but I do not remember that I ever heard you answer me. I beg pardon for taking all the conversation to myself, but it is entirely your own fault. . . .

To the Rev. William Mason

The Laureateship

19 *Dec.* 1757.

Dear Mason,

Though I very well know the bland emollient saponaceous qualities both of sack and silver, yet if any great man would say to me, 'I make you Rat-catcher to his Majesty, with a salary of £300 a-year and two butts of the best Malaga; and though it has been usual to catch a mouse or two, for form's sake, in public once a year, yet to you, sir, we shall not stand on these things,' I cannot say I should jump at it; nay, if they would drop the very name of the office, and call me Sinecure to the King's Majesty, I should feel a little awkward, and think everybody I saw smelt a rat about me; but I do not pretend to blame any one else that has not the same sensations; for my part, I would rather be serjeant trumpeter or pinmaker to the palace. Nevertheless I interest myself a little in the history of it, and rather wish somebody may accept it who will retrieve the credit of the thing, if it be retrieveable, or ever had any credit. Rowe was, I think, the last man of character that had it. As to Settle, whom you mention, he belonged to my lord mayor, not to the King. Eusden was a person of great hopes in his youth, though at last he turned out a drunken person. Dryden was as disgraceful to the office from his character, as the poorest scribbler could have been from his verses. The office itself has always humbled the professor hitherto (even in an age when kings were somebody), if he were a poor

writer by making him more conspicuous, and if he were a good one by setting him at war with the little fry of his own profession, for there are poets little enough to envy even a poet laureate.

To Dr. Wharton

A holiday in Kent

Pembroke College, 26 *Aug.* 1766.

Dear Doctor,

Whatever my pen may do, I am sure my thoughts expatiate nowhere oftener, or with more pleasure, than to Old Park. I hope you have made my peace with Miss Deborah. It is certain, whether her name were in my letter or not, she was as present to my memory as the rest of the little family; and I desire you would present her with two kisses in my name, and one a piece to all the others; for I shall take the liberty to kiss them all (great and small) as you are to be my proxy.

In spite of the rain, which I think continued with very short intervals till the beginning of this month, and quite effaced the summer from the year, I made a shift to pass May and June, not disagreeably, in Kent. I was surprised at the beauty of the road to Canterbury, which (I know not why) had not struck me in the same manner before. The whole country is a rich and well cultivated garden; orchards, cherry grounds, hop grounds, intermixed with corn and frequent villages, gentle risings covered with wood, and everywhere the Thames and Medway breaking in upon the landscape, with all their navigation. It was indeed owing to the bad weather that the

whole scene was dressed in that tender emerald green, which one usually sees only for a fortnight in the opening of Spring; and this continued till I left the country. My residence was eight miles east of Canterbury, in a little quiet valley on the skirts of Barham Down; in these parts the whole soil is chalk, and whenever it holds up, in half an hour it is dry enough to walk out. I took the opportunity of three or four days fine weather to go into the Isle of Thanet, saw Margate (which is Bartholomew Fair by the seaside), Ramsgate, and other places there; and so came by Sandwich, Deal, Dover, Folkestone, and Hythe, back again. The coast is not like Hartlepool, there are no rocks, but only chalky cliffs, of no great height, till you come to Dover. There indeed they are noble and picturesque, and the opposite coasts of France begin to bound your view, which was left before to range unlimited by anything but the horizon; yet it is by no means a *shipless* sea, but everywhere peopled with white sails and vessels of all sizes in motion; and take notice (except in the Isle, which is all corn fields, and has very little enclosure), there are in all places hedgerows and tall trees, even within a few yards of the beach, particularly Hythe stands on an eminence covered with wood. I shall confess we had fires of a night (aye and a day too) several times even in June: but don't go too far and take advantage of this, for it was the most untoward year that ever I remember.

Your friend Rousseau (I doubt) grows tired of Mr. Davenport and Derbyshire; he has picked a quarrel with David Hume, and writes him letters of fourteen pages folio, upbraiding him with all his *noirceurs*; take one only as a specimen. He says,

that at Calais they chanced to sleep in the same room together, and that he overheard David talking in his sleep, and saying, '*Ah! je le tiens, ce Jean-Jacques là.*' In short (I fear), for want of persecution and admiration (for these are his real complaints), he will go back to the Continent.

What shall I say to you about the ministry? I am as angry as a common council man of London about my Lord Chatham; but a little more patient, and will hold my tongue till the end of the year. In the meantime I do mutter in secret, and to you, that to quit the House of Commons, his natural strength, to sap his own popularity and grandeur (which no one but himself could have done) by assuming a foolish title; and to hope that he could win by it, and attach to him a court that hate him, and will dismiss him as soon as ever they dare, was the weakest thing that ever was done by so great a man. Had it not been for this, I should have rejoiced at the breach between him and Lord Temple, and at the union between him and the Duke of Grafton and Mr. Conway: but patience! we shall see! Stonehewer perhaps is in the country (for he hoped for a month's leave of absence), and if you see him you will learn more than I can tell you.

HORACE WALPOLE

1717-1797

To Richard West

Floods in the Arno

From Florence, *Nov.* 1740.

Child, I am going to let you see your shocking proceedings with us. On my conscience, I believe 't is three months since you wrote to either Gray or me. If you had been ill, Ashton would have said so; and if you had been dead, the gazettes would have said it. If you had been angry,—but that's impossible; how can one quarrel with folks three thousand miles off? We are neither divines nor commentators, and consequently have not hated you on paper. 'T is to show that my charity for you cannot be interrupted at this distance that I write to you, though I have nothing to say, for 't is a bad time for small news; and when emperors and czarinas are dying all up and down Europe, one can't pretend to tell you of anything that happens within our sphere. Not but that we have our accidents too. If you have had a great wind in England, we have had a great water at Florence. We have been trying to set out every day, and pop upon you[1] . . . It is fortunate that we stayed, for I don't know what had become of us! Yesterday, with violent rains, there came flouncing down from the mountains such a flood that it floated the whole city. The jewellers on the Old Bridge removed

[1] MS. torn here.

their commodities, and in two hours after the bridge was cracked. The torrent broke down the quays and drowned several coach-horses, which are kept here in stables under ground. We were moated into our house all day, which is near the Arno, and had the miserable spectacles of the ruins that were washed along with the hurricane. There was a cart with two oxen not quite dead, and four men in it drowned: but what was ridiculous, there came tiding along a fat hay-cock, with a hen and her eggs, and a cat. The torrent is considerably abated; but we expect terrible news from the country, especially from Pisa, which stands so much lower, and nearer the sea. There is a stone here, which, when the water overflows, Pisa is entirely flooded. The water rose two ells yesterday above that stone. Judge!

For this last month we have passed our time but dully, all diversions silenced on the Emperor's death, and everybody out of town. I have seen nothing but cards and dull pairs of cicisbeos. I have literally seen so much of love and pharaoh since being here, that I believe I shall never love either again so long as I live. Then I am got into a horrid lazy way of a morning. I don't believe I should know seven o'clock in the morning again if I was to see it. But I am returning to England, and shall grow very solemn and wise! Are you wise? Dear West, have pity on one who has done nothing of gravity for these two years, and do laugh sometimes. We do nothing else, and have contracted such formidable ideas of the good people of England that we are already nourishing great black eyebrows and great black beards, and teasing our countenances into wrinkles.

To Richard Bentley

Pictures and Garrick

Strawberry Hill, 15 *Aug.* 1755.

My dear Sir,

Though I wrote to you so lately, and have certainly nothing new to tell you, I can't help scribbling a line to you to-night, as I am going to Mr. Rigby's for a week or ten days, and must thank you first for the three pictures. One of them charms me, the Mount Orgueil, which is absolutely fine; the sea, and shadow upon it, are masterly. The other two I don't, at least won't, take for finished. If you please, Elizabeth Castle shall be Mr. Müntz's performance: indeed I see nothing of you in it. I do reconnoitre you in the Hercules and Nessus; but in both, your colours are dirty, carelessly dirty: in your distant hills you are improved, and not hard. The figures are too large—I don't mean in the Elizabeth Castle, for there they are neat; but the centaur, though he dies as well as Garrick can, is outrageous. Hercules and Deianira are by no means so: he is sentimental, and she most improperly sorrowful. However, I am pleased enough to beg you would continue. As soon as Mr. Müntz returns from the Vine, you shall have a good supply of colours. In the meantime why give up the good old trade of drawing? Have you no Indian ink, no soot-water, no snuff, no coat of onion, no juice of anything? If you love me, draw: you would if you knew the real pleasure you can give me. I have been studying all your drawings; and next to architecture and trees, I determine that you succeed in nothing better than animals. Now (as the newspapers

say) the late ingenious Mr. Seymour is dead, I would recommend horses and greyhounds to you. I should think you capable of a landscape or two with delicious bits of architecture. I have known you execute the light of a torch or lanthorn so well, that if it was called Schalken, a housekeeper at Hampton Court or Windsor, or a Catherine at Strawberry Hill, would show it, and say it cost ten thousand pounds. Nay, if I could believe that you would ever execute any more designs I proposed to you, I would give you a hint for a picture that struck me t'other day in Péréfixe's *Life of Henry IV.* He says, the king was often seen lying upon a common straw-bed among the soldiers, with a piece of brown bread in one hand, and a bit of charcoal in t'other, to draw an encampment, or town that he was besieging. If this is not character and a picture, I don't know what is.

I dined to-day at Garrick's : there were the Duke of Grafton, Lord and Lady Rochford, Lady Holderness, the crooked Mostyn, and Dabreu the Spanish minister ; two regents, of which one is lord chamberlain, the other groom of the stole ; and the wife of a secretary of state. This is being *sur un assez bon ton* for a player ! Don't you want to ask me how I like him ? Do want, and I will tell you.—I like her exceedingly ; her behaviour is all sense, and all sweetness too. I don't know how, he does not improve so fast upon me : there is a great deal of parts, and vivacity, and variety, but there is a great deal too of mimicry and burlesque. I am very ungrateful, for he flatters me abundantly ; but unluckily I know it. I was accustomed to it enough when my father was first minister : on his fall I lost it all at once : and since that, I have

lived with Mr. Chute, who is all vehemence ; with Mr. Fox, who is all disputation ; with Sir Charles Williams, who has no time from flattering himself ; with Gray, who does not hate to find fault with me ; with Mr. Conway, who is all sincerity ; and with you and Mr. Rigby, who have always laughed at me in a good-natured way. I don't know how, but I think I like all this as well—I beg his pardon, Mr. Raftor does flatter me ; but I should be a cormorant for praise, if I could swallow it whole as he gives it me.

Sir William Yonge, who has been extinct so long, is at last dead ; and the war, which began with such a flirt of vivacity, is I think gone to sleep. General Braddock has not yet sent over to claim the surname of Americanus. But why should I take pains to show you in how many ways I know nothing ?—Why ; I can tell it you in one word—why, Mr. Cambridge knows nothing !—I wish you good-night !

To George, Lord Lyttelton

Gray's Odes

Strawberry Hill, 25 *Aug.* 1757.

My Lord,

It is a satisfaction one can't often receive, to show a thing of great merit to a man of great taste. Your Lordship's approbation is conclusive, and it stamps a disgrace on the age, who have not given themselves the trouble to see any beauties in these *Odes* of Mr. Gray. They have cast their eyes over them, found them obscure, and looked no further, yet perhaps no compositions ever had

more sublime beauties than are in each. I agree with your Lordship in preferring the last upon the whole; the three first stanzas and half, down to *agonizing King*, are in my opinion equal to anything in any language I understand. Yet the three last of the first Ode please me very near as much. The description of Shakespeare is worthy Shakespeare: the account of Milton's blindness, though perhaps not strictly defensible, is very majestic. The character of Dryden's poetry is as animated as what it paints. I can even like the epithet *Orient*; as the last is the empire of fancy and poesy, I would allow its livery to be erected into a colour. I think *blue-eyed Pleasures* is allowable: when Homer gave eyes of what hue he pleased to his Queen-Goddesses, sure Mr. Gray may tinge those of their handmaids.

In answer to your Lordship's objection to *many-twinkling*, in that beautiful epode, I will quote authority to which you will yield. As Greek as the expression is, it struck Mrs. Garrick, and she says, on that whole picture, that Mr. Gray is the only poet who ever understood dancing.

These faults I think I can defend, and can excuse others; even the great obscurity of the latter, for I do not see it in the first; the subject of it has been taken for music,—it is the Power and Progress of Harmonious Poetry. I think his objection to prefixing a title to it was wrong—that Mr. Cooke published an ode with such a title. If the Louis the Great, whom Voltaire has discovered in Hungary, had not disappeared from history himself, would not Louis Quatorze have annihilated him? I was aware that the second would have darknesses, and prevailed for the insertion of what

notes there are, and would have had more. Mr. Gray said, whatever wanted explanation did not deserve it, but that sentence was never so far from being an axiom as in the present case. Not to mention how he had shackled himself with strophe, antistrophe, and epode (yet acquitting himself nobly), the nature of prophecy forbade him naming his kings. To me they are apparent enough—yet I am far from thinking either piece perfect, though with what faults they have, I hold them in the first rank of genius and poetry. The second strophe of the first Ode is inexcusable, nor do I wonder your Lordship blames it; even when one does understand it, perhaps the last line is too turgid. I am not fond of the antistrophe that follows. In the second Ode he made some corrections for the worse. *Brave Urion* was originally *stern*: brave is insipid and commonplace. In the third antistrophe, *leave me unblessed, unpitied*, stood at first, *leave your despairing Caradoc.* But the capital faults in my opinion are these—what punishment was it to Edward I to hear that his grandson would conquer France? or is so common an event as Edward III being deserted on his death-bed, worthy of being made part of a curse that was to avenge a nation? I can't cast my eye here, without crying out on those beautiful lines that follow, *Fair smiles the morn?* Though the images are extremely complicated, what painting in the whirlwind, likened to a lion lying in ambush for his evening prey, *in grim repose.* Thirst and hunger mocking Richard II appear to me too ludicrously like the devils in *The Tempest*, that whisk away the banquet from the shipwrecked Dukes. From thence to the conclusion of Queen Elizabeth's

portrait, which he has faithfully copied from Speed, in the passage where she humbled the Polish Ambassador, I admire. I can even allow that image of Rapture hovering like an ancient grotesque, though it strictly has little meaning: but there I take my leave—the last stanza has no beauties for me. I even think its obscurity fortunate, for the allusions to Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, are not only weak, but the two last returning again, after appearing so gloriously in the first Ode, and with so much fainter colours, enervate the whole conclusion.

Your Lordship sees that I am no enthusiast to Mr. Gray: his great lustre has not dazzled me, as his obscurity seems to have blinded his contemporaries. Indeed, I do not think that they ever admired him, except in his Churchyard, though the Eton Ode was far its superior, and is certainly not obscure. The Eton Ode is perfect: those of more masterly execution have defects, yet not to admire them is total want of taste. I have an aversion to tame poetry; at best, perhaps the art is the sublimest of the *difficiles nugae*; to measure or rhyme prose is trifling without being difficult.

To George Montagu

At Lady Suffolk's

Arlington Street, 11 *Jan.* 1764.

It is an age, I own, since I wrote to you; but except politics, what was there to send you? and for politics, the present are too contemptible to be recorded by anybody but journalists, gazetteers,

and such historians! The ordinary of Newgate, or Mr. ——, who write for their monthly half-crown, and who are indifferent whether Lord Bute, Lord Melcombe, or Maclean is their hero, may swear they find diamonds on dunghills; but you will excuse *me*, if I let our correspondence lie dormant rather than deal in such trash. I am forced to send Lord Hertford and Sir Horace Mann such garbage, because they are out of England, and the sea softens and makes palatable any potion, as it does claret; but unless I can divert *you*, I had rather wait till we can laugh together; the best employment for friends, who do not mean to pick one another's pockets, nor make a property of either's frankness. Instead of politics, therefore, I shall amuse you to-day with a fairy tale.

I was desired to be at my Lady Suffolk's on New Year's morn, where I found Lady Temple and others. On the toilet Miss Hotham spied a small round box. She seized it with all the eagerness and curiosity of eleven years. In it was wrapped up a heart-diamond ring, and a paper in which, in a hand as small as Buckinger's, who used to write the Lord's Prayer in the compass of a silver penny, were the following lines:

Sent by a sylph, unheard, unseen,
A new-year's gift from Mab our queen:
But tell it not, for if you do,
You will be pinch'd all black and blue.
Consider well, what a disgrace,
To show abroad your mottled face:
Then seal your lips, put on the ring,
And sometimes think of Ob. the King.

You will easily guess that Lady Temple was the

poetess, and that we were delighted with the genteelness of the thought and execution. The child, you may imagine, was less transported with the poetry than the present. Her attention, however, was hurried backwards and forwards from the ring to a new coat, that she had been trying on when sent for down; impatient to revisit her coat, and to show the ring to her maid, she whisked upstairs; when she came down again, she found a letter sealed, and lying on the floor—new exclamations! Lady Suffolk bade her open it: here it is:

Your tongue, too nimble for your sense,
Is guilty of a high offence;
Hath introduced unkind debate,
And topsy-turvy turn'd our state.
In gallantry I sent the ring,
The token of a love-sick king:
Under fair Mab's auspicious name
From me the trifling present came.
You blabb'd the news in Suffolk's ear;
The tattling zephyrs brought it here,
As Mab was indolently laid
Under a poppy's spreading shade.
The jealous queen started in rage;
She kick'd her crown, and beat her page:
'Bring me my magic wand', she cries;
'Under that primrose, there it lies;
I'll change the silly, saucy chit,
Into a flea, a louse, a nit,
A worm, a grasshopper, a rat,
An owl, a monkey, hedgehog, bat.
But hold, why not by fairy art
Transform the wretch into ——?

Ixion once a cloud embraced,
By Jove and jealousy well placed;
What sport to see proud Oberon stare
And flirt it with a ——— !'
Then thrice she stamped the trembling ground,
And thrice she waved her wand around;
When I, endow'd with greater skill,
And less inclined to do you ill,
Mutter'd some words, withheld her arm,
And kindly stopp'd the unfinish'd charm.
But though not changed to owl or bat,
Or something more indelicate;
Yet, as your tongue has run too fast,
Your boasted beauty must not last.
No more shall frolic Cupid lie
In ambuscade in either eye,
From thence to aim his keenest dart
To captivate each youthful heart:
No more shall envious misses pine
At charms now flown, that once were thine:
No more, since you so ill behave,
Shall injured Oberon be your slave.

There is one word which I could wish had not been there, though it is prettily excused afterwards. The next day my Lady Suffolk desired I would write her a patent for appointing Lady Temple poet laureate to the fairies. I was excessively out of order with a pain in my stomach, which I had had for ten days, and was fitter to write verses like a poet laureate, than for making one; however, I was going home to dinner alone, and at six I sent her some lines, which you ought to have seen how sick I was, to excuse; but first, I must tell you my tale methodically. The next morning by nine o'clock Miss Hotham (she must

forgive me twenty years hence for saying she was eleven, for I recollect she is but ten) arrived at Lady Temple's, her face and neck all spotted with saffron, and limping. 'Oh, madam!' said she, 'I am undone for ever if you do not assist me!' 'Lord, child,' cried my Lady Temple, 'what is the matter?' thinking she had hurt herself, or lost the ring, and that she was stolen out before her aunt was up. 'Oh, madam,' said the girl, 'nobody but you can assist me!' My Lady Temple protests the child acted her part so well as to deceive her. 'What can I do for you?' 'Dear madam, take this load from my back; nobody but you can.' Lady Temple turned her round, and upon her back was tied a child's waggon. In it were three tiny purses of blue velvet; in one of them a silver cup, in another a crown of laurel, and in the third four new silver pennies, with the patent, signed at top, 'Oberon Imperator'; and two sheets of warrants strung together with blue silk according to form; and at top an office seal of wax and a chaplet of cut paper on it. The warrants were these:

From the Royal Mews:

A waggon with the draught horses, delivered by command without fee.

From the Lord Chamberlain's Office:

A warrant with the royal sign manual, delivered by command without fee, being first entered in the office books.

From the Lord Steward's Office:

A butt of sack, delivered without fee or gratuity, with an order for returning the cask for the use of the office, by command.

From the Great Wardrobe:

Three velvet bags, delivered without fee, by command.

From the Treasurer of the Household's Office:

A year's salary paid free from land-tax, poundage, or any other deduction whatever, by command.

From the Jewel Office:

A silver butt, a silver cup, a wreath of bays, by command without fee.

Then came the Patent:

By these presents be it known,
To all who bend before our throne,
Fays and fairies, elves and sprites,
Beauteous dames and gallant knights,
That we, Oberon the grand,
Emperor of fairy-land,
King of moonshine, prince of dreams,
Lord of Aganippe's streams,
Baron of the dimpled isles
That lie in pretty maidens' smiles,
Arch-treasurer of all the graces
Dispersed through fifty lovely faces,
Sovereign of the slipper's order,
With all the rites thereon that border,
Defender of the sylphic faith,
Declare — and thus your monarch saith:
Whereas there is a noble dame,
Whom mortals Countess Temple name,
To whom ourself did erst impart
The choicest secrets of our art,
Taught her to tune the harmonious line
To our own melody divine,

Taught her the graceful negligence,
Which, scorning art and veiling sense,
Achieves that conquest o'er the heart
Sense seldom gains, and never art;
This lady, 't is our royal will,
Our laureate's vacant seat should fill:
A chaplet of immortal bays
Shall crown her brow and guard her lays;
Of nectar sack an acorn cup
Be at her board each year filled up;
And as each quarter feast comes round
A silver penny shall be found
Within the compass of her shoe—
And so we bid you all adieu!

Given at our palace of Cowslip Castle, the shortest night of the year.

OBERON.

And underneath,

HOTHAMINA.

How shall I tell you the greatest curiosity of the story? The whole plan and execution of the second act was laid and adjusted by my Lady Suffolk herself and Will. Chetwynd, Master of the Mint, Lord Bolingbroke's Oroonoho-Chetwynd; he fourscore, she past seventy-six; and what is more, much worse than I was, for, added to her deafness, she has been confined these three weeks with the gout in her eyes, and was actually then in misery, and had been without sleep. What spirits, and cleverness, and imagination, at that age, and under those afflicting circumstances! You reconnoitre her old court knowledge, how charmingly she has applied it! Do you wonder I pass so many hours and evenings with her?

Alas! I had like to have lost her this morning! They had poulticed her feet to draw the gout downwards, and began to succeed yesterday, but to-day it flew up into her head, and she was almost in convulsions with the agony, and screamed dreadfully; proof enough how ill she was, for her patience and good breeding make her for ever sink and conceal what she feels. This evening the gout has been driven back to her foot, and I trust she is out of danger. Her loss would be irreparable to me at Twickenham, where she is by far the most rational and agreeable company I have....

To Lady Hervey

A quiet life

Strawberry Hill, 11 *June*, 1765.

I am almost as much ashamed, Madam, to plead the true cause of my faults towards your ladyship, as to have been guilty of any neglect. It is scandalous, at my age, to have been carried backwards and forwards to balls and suppers and parties by very young people, as I was all last week. My resolutions of growing old and staid are admirable: I wake with a sober plan, and intend to pass the day with my friends—then comes the Duke of Richmond, and hurries me down to Whitehall to dinner—then the Duchess of Grafton sends for me to loo in Upper Grosvenor Street—before I can get thither, I am begged to step to Kensington, to give Mrs. Anne Pitt my opinion about a bow-window—after the loo, I am to march back to Whitehall to supper—and after that, am

to walk with Miss Pelham on the terrace till two in the morning, because it is moonlight and her chair is not come. All this does not help my morning laziness; and by the time I have breakfasted, fed my birds and my squirrels, and dressed, there is an auction ready. In short, Madam, this was my life last week, and is I think every week, with the addition of forty episodes.—Yet, ridiculous as it is, I send it to your ladyship, because I had rather you should laugh at me than be angry. I cannot offend you in intention, but I fear my sins of omission are equal to a good many Christian's. Pray forgive me. I really will begin to be between forty and fifty by the time I am fourscore: and I truly believe I shall bring my resolutions within compass; for I have not chalked out any particular business that will take me above forty years more; so that, if I do not get acquainted with the grandchildren of all the present age, I shall lead a quiet sober life yet before I die. . . .

To the Rev. William Cole

Gray's death

Paris, 12 *Aug.* 1771.

Dear Sir,

I am excessively shocked at reading in the papers that Mr. Gray is dead! I wish to God you may be able to tell me it is not true! Yet in this painful uncertainty I must rest some days! None of my acquaintance are in London. I do not know to whom to apply but to you. Alas! I fear in vain! Too many circumstances speak it true! the detail is exact;—a second paper arrived

by the same post, and does not contradict it—and what is worse, I saw him but four or five days before I came hither; he had been to Kensington for the air, complained of gout flying about him, of sensations of it in his stomach, and indeed, thought him changed, and that he looked ill—still I had not the least idea of his being in danger. —I started up from my chair, when I read the paragraph—a cannon-ball could not have surprised me more! The shock but ceased, to give way to my concern; and my hopes are too ill founded to mitigate it. If nobody has the charity to write to me, my anxiety must continue till the end of the month, for I shall set out on my return on the 26th; and unless you receive this time enough for your answer to leave London on the 20th, in the evening, I cannot meet it, till I find it in Arlington Street, whither I beg you to direct it.

If the event is but too true, pray add to this melancholy service, that of telling me any circumstances you know of his death. Our long, very long friendship, and his genius, must endear to me everything that relates to him. What writings has he left? Who are his executors? I should earnestly wish, if he has destined anything to the public, to print it at my press—it would do me honour, and would give me an opportunity of expressing what I feel for him. Methinks, as we grow old, our only business here is to adorn the graves of our friends, or to dig our own.

To the Rev. William Mason

The quarrel with Gray

2 March, 1773.

What shall I say ? How shall I thank you for the kind manner in which you submit your papers to my correction ? But if you are friendly, I must be just. I am so far from being dissatisfied, that I must beg to shorten your pen, and in that respect only would I wish, with regard to myself, to alter your text. I am conscious that in the beginning of the differences between Gray and me, the fault was mine. I was young, too fond of my own diversions ; nay, I do not doubt, too much intoxicated by indulgence, vanity, and the insolence of my situation, as a prime minister's son, not to have been inattentive to the feelings of one, I blush to say it, that I knew was obliged to me ; of one, whom presumption and folly made me deem not very superior in parts, though I have since felt my infinite inferiority to him. I treated him insolently. He loved me, and I did not think he did. I reproached him with the difference between us, when he acted from the conviction of knowing that he was my superior. I often disregarded his wish of seeing places, which I would not quit my own amusements to visit; though I offered to send him thither without me. Forgive me, if I say that his temper was not conciliating, at the same time that I will confess to you that he acted a most friendly part, had I had the sense to take advantage of it. He freely told me my faults. I declared I did not wish to hear them, nor would correct them. You will not wonder, that with the

dignity of his spirit, and the obstinate carelessness of mine, the breach must have widened till we became incompatible.

After this confession, I fear you will think I fall short in the words I wish to have substituted for some of yours. If you think them inadequate to the state of the case, as I own they are, preserve this letter, and let some future Sir John Dalrymple produce it to load my memory; but I own I do not desire that any ambiguity should aid his invention to forge an account for me. If you have no objection, I would propose your narrative should run thus . . . and contain no more, till a proper time shall come for publishing the truth, as I have stated it to you. While I am living, it is not pleasant to see my private disagreements discussed in magazines and newspapers.

To the Countess of Upper Ossory

Fashionable intelligence

Strawberry Hill, 27 *March*, 1773.

What play makes you laugh very much, and yet is a very wretched comedy? Dr. Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer.* Stoops indeed!—so she does, that is the Muse; she is draggled up to the knees, and has trudged, I believe, from Southwark fair. The whole view of the piece is low humour, and no humour is in it. All the merit is in the situations, which are comic; the heroine has no more modesty than Lady Bridget, and the author's wit is as much *manqué* as the lady's; but some of the characters are well acted, and Woodward

speaks a poor prologue, written by Garrick, admirably.

You perceive, Madam, that I have boldly sallied to a play; but the heat of the house and of this sultry March half killed me, yet I limp about as if I was young and pleased. From the play I travelled to Upper Grosvenor Street, to Lady Edgecumbe's, supped at Lady Hertford's. That Maccaroni rake, Lady Powis, who is just come to her estate and spending it, calling in with news of a fire in the Strand at past one in the morning, Lady Hertford, Lady Powis, Mrs. Howe, and I, set out to see it, and were within an inch of seeing the Adelphi buildings burnt to the ground. I was to have gone to the Oratorio next night for Miss Linley's sake, but, being engaged to the French ambassador's ball afterwards, I thought I was not quite Hercules enough for so many labours, and declined the former.

The house was all arbours and bowers, but rather more approaching to Calcutta, where so many English were stewed to death; for as the Queen would not dis-Maid of Honour herself of Miss Vernon till after the Oratorio, the ball-room was not opened till she arrived, and we were penned together in the little hall till we could not breathe. The quadrilles were very pretty: Mrs. Damer, Lady Sefton, Lady Melbourne, and the Princess Czartoriski in blue satin, with blond and *collets montés à la reine Elizabeth*; Lord Robert Spencer, Mr. Fitzpatrick, Lord Carlisle, and I forget whom, in like dresses with red sashes, *de rouge*, black hats with diamond loops and a few feathers before, began; then the Henri Quatres and Quatresses, who were Lady Craven, Miss Minching, the two

Misses Vernons, Mr. Storer, Mr. Hanger, the Duc de Lauzun, and George Damer, all in white, the men with black hats and white feathers flapping behind, danced another quadrille, and then both quadrilles joined; after which Mrs. Hobart, all in gauze and spangles, like a spangle-pudding, a Miss I forget, Lord Edward Bentinck, and a Mr. Corbet, danced a *pas-de-quatre*, in which Mrs. Hobart indeed performed admirably.

The fine Mrs. Matthews in white, trimmed down all the neck and petticoat with scarlet cock's feathers, appeared like a new macaw brought from Otaheite; but of all the pretty creatures next to the Carrara (who was not there) was Mrs. Bunbury; so that with her I was in love till one o'clock, and then came home to bed. The Duchess of Queensberry had a round gown of rose-colour, with a man's cape, which, with the stomacher and sleeves, was all trimmed with mother-of-pearl earrings. This Pindaric gown was a sudden thought to surprise the Duke, with whom she had dined in another dress. Did you ever see so good a joke? . . .

Lord Chesterfield was dead before my last letter that foretold his death set out. Alas! I shall have no more of his lively sayings, Madam, to send you. Oh yes! I have his last: being told of the quarrel in Spitalfields, and even that Mrs. F[itzroy] struck Miss P[oole], he said, 'I always thought Mrs. F. a *striking* beauty.'

Thus, having given away all his wit to the last farthing, he has left nothing but some poor witticisms in his will, tying up his heir by forfeitures and jokes from going to Newmarket.

I wrote this letter at Strawberry, and find

nothing new in town to add but a cold north-east that has brought back all our fires and furs. Pray tell me a little of your Ladyship's futurity, and whether you will deign to pass through London.

To the Rev. William Cole

Antiquaries and authors

Arlington Street, 27 *April*, 1773.

. . . Mr. Gough wants to be introduced to me! Indeed! I would see him; . . . but he is so dull that he would only be troublesome—and besides, you know I shun authors, and would never have been one myself, if it obliged me to keep such bad company. They are always in earnest, and think their profession serious, and will dwell upon trifles, and reverence learning. I laugh at all these things, and write only to laugh at them, and divert myself. None of us are authors of any consequence; and it is the most ridiculous of all vanities to be vain of being *mediocre*. A page in a great author humbles me to the dust; and the conversation of those that are not superior to myself, reminds me of what will be thought of myself. I blush to flatter them, or to be flattered by them, and should dread letters being published some time or other, in which they would relate our interviews, and we should appear like those puny conceited witlings in Shenstone's and Hughes's *Correspondence*, who give themselves airs from being in possession of the soil of Parnassus for the time being; as peers are proud, because they enjoy the estates of great men who went before them. Mr. Gough is very welcome to

see Strawberry Hill; or I would help him to any scraps in my possession, that would assist his publications; though he is one of those industrious who are only re-burying the dead—but I cannot be acquainted with him. It is contrary to my system and my humour; and besides, I know nothing of barrows, and Danish intrenchments, and Saxon barbarisms, and Phoenician characters—in short, I know nothing of those ages that knew nothing—how then should I be of use to modern litterati? All the Scotch metaphysicians have sent me their works. I did not read one of them, because I do not understand what is not understood by those that write about it; and I did not get acquainted with one of the writers. I should like to be acquainted with Mr. Anstey, even though he wrote Lord Buckhorse, or with the author of the *Heroic Epistle*—I have no thirst to know the rest of my contemporaries, from the absurd bombast of Dr. Johnson down to the silly Dr. Goldsmith; though the latter changeling has had bright gleams of parts, and though the former had sense, till he changed it for words, and sold it for a pension. Don't think me scornful. Recollect that I have seen Pope, and lived with Gray. Adieu!

To the Miss Berrys

Their first meeting

Tuesday night, 8 o'clock, 17 *Sept.* 1793.

My beloved Spouses,

Whom I love better than Solomon loved his one spouse—or his one thousand. I lament that the summer is over; not because of its iniquity,

but because you two made it so delightful to me, that six weeks of gout could not sour it. Pray take care of yourselves—not for your own sakes, but for mine ; for, as I have just had my quota of gout, I may, possibly, expect to see another summer ; and, as you allow that I do know my own, and when I wish for anything and have it, am entirely satisfied, you may depend upon it that I shall be as happy with a third summer, if I reach it, as I have been with the two last.

Consider, that I have been threescore years and ten looking for a society that I perfectly like ; and at last there dropped out of the clouds into Lady Herries's room two young gentlewomen, who I so little thought were sent thither on purpose for me, that when I was told they were the charming Miss Berrys, I would not even go to the side of the chamber where they sat. But, as Fortune never throws anything at one's head without hitting one, I soon found out that the charming Berrys were precisely *ce qu'il me fallait* ; and that though young enough to be my great-grand-daughters, lovely enough to turn the heads of all our youths, and sensible enough, if said youths have any brains, to set all their heads to rights again. Yes, sweet damsels, I have found that you can bear to pass half your time with an antediluvian, without discovering any *ennui* or disgust ; though his greatest merit towards you is, that he is not one of those old fools who fancy they are in love in their dotage. I have no such vagary ; though I am not sorry that some folks think I am so absurd, since it frets their selfishness.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

1728–1774

To his Mother

At Cork

[c. 1751.]

My dear Mother,

If you will sit down and calmly listen to what I say, you shall be fully resolved in every one of those many questions you have asked me. I went to Cork and converted my horse, which you prize so much higher than Fiddleback, into cash, took my passage in a ship bound for America, and, at the same time, paid the captain for my freight and all the other expenses of my voyage. But it so happened that the wind did not answer for three weeks; and you know, mother, that I could not command the elements. My misfortune was, that, when the wind served, I happened to be with a party in the country, and my friend the captain never inquired after me, but set sail with as much indifference as if I had been on board. The remainder of my time I employed in the city and its environs, viewing everything curious; and you know no one can starve while he has money in his pocket.

Reduced, however, to my last two guineas, I began to think of my dear mother and friends whom I had left behind me, and so bought that generous beast Fiddleback, and made adieu to Cork with only five shillings in my pocket. This,

to be sure, was but a scanty allowance for man and horse towards a journey of above a hundred miles; but I did not despair, for I knew I must find friends on the road.

I recollected particularly an old and faithful acquaintance I made at college, who had often and earnestly pressed me to spend a summer with him, and he lived but eight miles from Cork. This circumstance of vicinity he would expatiate on to me with peculiar emphasis. 'We shall,' says he, 'enjoy the delights of both city and country, and you shall command my stable and my purse.'

However, upon the way, I met a poor woman all in tears, who told me her husband had been arrested for a debt he was not able to pay, and that his eight children must now starve, bereaved as they were of his industry, which had been their only support. I thought myself at home, being not far from my good friend's house, and therefore parted with a moiety of all my store; and pray, mother, ought I not to have given her the other half-crown, for what she got would be of little use to her? However, I soon arrived at the mansion of my affectionate friend, guarded by the vigilance of a huge mastiff, who flew at me, and would have torn me to pieces but for the assistance of a woman, whose countenance was not less grim than that of the dog; yet she with great humanity relieved me from the jaws of this Cerberus, and was prevailed on to carry up my name to her master.

Without suffering me to wait long, my old friend, who was then recovering from a severe fit of sickness, came down in his nightcap, nightgown, and slippers, and embraced me with the most cordial welcome, showed me in, and after giving

me a history of his indisposition, assured me that he considered himself peculiarly fortunate in having under his roof the man he most loved on earth, and whose stay with him must, above all things, contribute to his perfect recovery. I now repented sorely I had not given the poor woman the other half-crown, as I thought all my bills of humanity would be punctually answered by this worthy man. I revealed to him my whole soul; I opened to him all my distresses; and freely owned that I had but one half-crown in my pocket; but that now, like a ship after weathering out the storm, I considered myself secure in a safe and hospitable harbour. He made no answer, but walked about the room, rubbing his hands as one in deep study. This I imputed to the sympathetic feelings of a tender heart, which increased my esteem for him, and as that increased, I gave the most favourable interpretation to his silence. I construed it into delicacy of sentiment, as if he dreaded to wound my pride by expressing his commiseration in words, leaving his generous conduct to speak for itself.

It now approached six o'clock in the evening; and as I had eaten no breakfast, and as my spirits were raised, my appetite for dinner grew uncommonly keen. At length the old woman came into the room with two plates, one spoon, and a dirty cloth which she laid upon the table. This appearance, without increasing my spirits, did not diminish my appetite. My protectress soon returned with a small bowl of sago, a small porringer of sour milk, a loaf of stale brown bread, and the heel of an old cheese all over crawling with mites. My friend apologized that his illness obliged him to live on

slops, and that better fare was not in the house; observing, at the same time, that a milk diet was certainly the most healthful; and at eight o'clock he again recommended a regular life, declaring that for his part he would lie down with the lamb and rise with the lark. My hunger was at this time so exceedingly sharp that I wished for another slice of the loaf, but was obliged to go to bed without even that refreshment.

This lenten entertainment I had received made me resolve to depart as soon as possible; accordingly, next morning, when I spoke of going, he did not oppose my resolution; he rather commended my design, adding some very sage counsel upon the occasion. 'To be sure,' said he, 'the longer you stay away from your mother, the more you will grieve her and your other friends; and possibly they are already afflicted at hearing of this foolish expedition you have made.' Notwithstanding all this, and without any hope of softening such a sordid heart, I again renewed the tale of my distress, and asking 'how he thought I could travel above a hundred miles upon one half-crown?' I begged to borrow a single guinea, which I assured him should be repaid with thanks. 'And you know, sir,' said I, 'it is no more than I have often done for you.' To which he firmly answered, 'Why, look you, Mr. Goldsmith, that is neither here nor there. I have paid you all you ever lent me, and this sickness of mine has left me bare of cash. But I have bethought myself of a conveyance for you; sell your horse, and I will furnish you with a much better one to ride on.' I readily grasped at his proposal, and begged to see the nag; on which he led me to his bedchamber, and

from under the bed he pulled out a stout oak stick. 'Here he is,' said he; 'take this in your hand, and it will carry you to your mother's with more safety than such a horse as you ride.' I was in doubt, when I got it into my hand, whether I should not in the first place apply it to his pate; but a rap at the street-door made the wretch fly to it, and when I returned to the parlour, he introduced me, as if nothing of the kind had happened, to the gentleman who entered, as Mr. Goldsmith, his most ingenious and worthy friend, of whom he had so often heard him speak with rapture. I could scarcely compose myself; and must have betrayed indignation in my mien to the stranger, who was a counsellor-at-law in the neighbourhood, a man of engaging aspect and polite address.

After spending an hour, he asked my friend and me to dine with him at his house. This I declined at first, as I wished to have no further communication with my hospitable friend; but at the solicitation of both I at last consented, determined as I was by two motives; one, that I was prejudiced in favour of the looks and manner of the counsellor; and the other, that I stood in need of a comfortable dinner. And there, indeed, I found everything that I could wish, abundance without profusion, and elegance without affectation. In the evening, when my old friend, who had eaten very plentifully at his neighbour's table, but talked again of lying down with the lamb, made a motion to me for retiring, our generous host requested I should take a bed with him, upon which I plainly told my old friend that he might go home and take care of the horse he had given me, but that I should never

re-enter his doors. He went away with a laugh, leaving me to add this to the other little things the counsellor already knew of his plausible neighbour.

And now, my dear mother, I found sufficient to reconcile me to all my follies; for here I spent three whole days. The counsellor had two sweet girls to his daughters, who played enchantingly on the harpsichord; and yet it was but a melancholy pleasure I felt the first time I heard them: for that being the first time also that either of them had touched the instrument since their mother's death, I saw the tears in silence trickle down their father's cheeks. I every day endeavoured to go away, but every day was pressed and obliged to stay. On my going, the counsellor offered me his purse, with a horse and servant to convey me home; but the latter I declined, and only took a guinea to bear my necessary expenses on the road.

To Robert Bryanton

In Scotland

Edinburgh, 26 *Sept.* 1753.

My dear Bob,

How many good excuses (and you know I was ever good at an excuse) might I call up to vindicate my past shameful silence! I might tell how I wrote a long letter on my first coming hither, and seem vastly angry at my not receiving an answer; I might allege that business (with business you know I was always pestered) had never given me time to finger a pen—but I suppress

those and twenty more equally plausible, and as easily invented, since they might be attended with a slight inconvenience of being known to be lies. Let me then speak truth. An hereditary indolence (I have it from the mother's side) has hitherto prevented my writing to you, and still prevents my writing at least twenty-five letters more, due to my friends in Ireland. No turnspit dog gets up into his wheel with more reluctance than I sit down to write; yet no dog ever loved the roast meat he turns better than I do him I now address. Yet what shall I say now I'm entered? Shall I tire you with a description of this unfruitful country; where I must lead you over their hills all brown with heath, or their valleys scarce able to feed a rabbit? Man alone seems to be the only creature who has arrived to the natural size in this poor soil. Every part of the country presents the same dismal landscape. No grove, nor brook, lend their music to cheer the stranger, or make the inhabitants forget their poverty. Yet with all these disadvantages, enough to call him down to humility, the Scotchman is one of the proudest things alive. The poor have pride ever ready to relieve them. If mankind should happen to despise them, they are masters of their own admiration; and *that* they can plentifully bestow upon themselves

From their pride and poverty, as I take it, results one advantage this country enjoys; namely, the gentlemen here are much better bred than amongst us. No such characters here as our fox-hunters; and they have expressed great surprise when I informed them that some men in Ireland of one thousand pounds a-year spend their whole lives

in running after a hare, and drinking to be drunk; and truly, if such a being, equipped in his hunting dress, came among a circle of Scotch gentry, they would behold him with the same astonishment that a countryman would King George on horseback.

The men here have generally high check-bones, and are lean and swarthy, fond of action, dancing in particular. Though now I mention dancing, let me say something of their balls, which are very frequent here. When a stranger enters the dancing-hall, he sees one end of the room taken up with the ladies, who sit dismally in a group by themselves; on the other end stand their pensive partners that are to be; but no more intercourse between the sexes than there is between two countries at war. The ladies indeed may ogle, and the gentlemen sigh; but an embargo is laid on any closer commerce. At length, to interrupt hostilities, the lady directress, or intendant, or what you will, pitches on a gentleman and lady to walk a minuet; which they perform with a formality that approaches to despondence. After five or six couple have thus walked the gauntlet, all stand up to country dances; each gentleman furnished with a partner from the aforesaid lady directress; so they dance much and say nothing, and thus concludes our assembly. I told a Scotch gentleman that such profound silence resembled the ancient procession of the Roman matrons in honour of Ceres; and the Scotch gentleman told me (and, faith, I believe he was right) that I was a very great pedant for my pains.

Now I am come to the ladies; and to show that I love Scotland, and everything that belongs to so charming a country, I insist on it, and will give

him leave to break my head that denies it—that the Scotch ladies are ten thousand times handsomer and finer than the Irish. To be sure, now, I see your sisters Betty and Peggy vastly surprised at my partiality, but tell them flatly, I don't value them, or their fine skins, or eyes, or good sense, or ——, a potato; for I say it, and will maintain it, and as a convincing proof (I'm in a very great passion) of what I assert, the Scotch ladies say it themselves. But to be less serious; where will you find a language so pretty become a pretty mouth as the broad Scotch? and the women here speak it in its highest purity; for instance, teach one of their young ladies to pronounce 'Whoar wull I gong?' with a becoming wideness of mouth and I'll lay my life they will wound every hearer.

We have no such character here as a coquet, but alas! how many envious prudes! Some days ago I walked into my Lord Kilcoubry's (don't be surprised, my lord is but a glover), when the Duchess of Hamilton (that fair who sacrificed her beauty to ambition, and her inward peace to a title and gilt equipage) passed by in her chariot; her battered husband, or more properly the guardian of her charms, sat by her side. Straight envy began, in the shape of no less than three ladies who sat with me, to find faults in her faultless form.—'For my part,' says the first, 'I think what I always thought, that the Duchess has too much red in her complexion.' 'Madam, I'm of your opinion,' says the second; 'I think her face has a palish cast too much on the delicate order.' 'And let me tell you,' adds the third lady, whose mouth was puckered up to

the size of an issue, 'that the Duchess has fine lips, but she wants a mouth.'—At this every lady drew up her lips as if going to pronounce the letter P.

But how ill, my Bob, does it become me to ridicule women with whom I have scarce any correspondence! There are, 't is certain, handsome women here; and 't is as certain there are handsome men to keep them company. An ugly and a poor man is society for himself; and such society the world lets me enjoy in great abundance. Fortune has given you circumstances, and nature a person to look charming in the eyes of the fair world. Nor do I envy my dear Bob such blessings, while I may sit down and laugh at the world and at myself, the most ridiculous object in it. But I begin to grow splenetic, and perhaps the fit may continue till I receive an answer to this. I know you can't send news from Ballymahon, but such as it is, send it all; everything you write will be agreeable and entertaining to me.

Has George Conway put up a sign yet; or John Finecly left off drinking drams; or Tom Allen got a new wig? But I leave to your own choice what to write. While Oliver Goldsmith lives, know you have a friend.

PS.—Give my sincere respects (not compliments, do you mind) to your agreeable family, and give my service to my mother, if you see her; for, as you express it in Ireland, I have a sneaking kindness for her still.

Direct to me,——Student in Physic, in Edinburgh.

To his uncle Contarine

In Holland

Leyden, *April* or *May*, 1754.

Dear Sir,

I suppose by this time I am accused of either neglect or ingratitude, and my silence imputed to my usual slowness of writing. But believe me, Sir, when I say, that till now I had not an opportunity of sitting down with that ease of mind which writing required. You may see by the top of the letter that I am at Leyden; but of my journey hither you must be informed. Some time after the receipt of your last, I embarked for Bordeaux, on board a Scotch ship called the *St. Andrews*, Capt. John Wall, master. The ship made a tolerable appearance, and as another inducement, I was let to know that six agreeable passengers were to be my company. Well, we were but two days at sea when a storm drove us into a city of England called Newcastle-upon-Tyne. We all went ashore to refresh us after the fatigue of our voyage. Seven men and I were one day on shore, and on the following evening as we were all very merry, the room door bursts open, enters a sergeant and twelve grenadiers with their bayonets screwed, and puts us all under the King's arrest. It seems my company were Scotchmen in the French service, and had been in Scotland to enlist soldiers for the French army. I endeavoured all I could to prove my innocence; however, I remained in prison with the rest a fortnight, and with difficulty got off even then. Dear Sir, keep this all a secret, or at least say it was for debt;

for if it were once known at the University, I should hardly get a degree. But hear how Providence interposed in my favour; the ship was gone on to Bordeaux before I got from prison, and was wrecked at the mouth of the Garonne, and every one of the crew were drowned. It happened the last great storm. There was a ship at that time ready for Holland. I embarked, and in nine days, thank my God, I arrived safe at Rotterdam; whence I travelled by land to Leyden; and whence I now write.

You may expect some account of this country, and though I am not well qualified for such an undertaking, yet shall I endeavour to satisfy some part of your expectations. Nothing surprised me more than the books every day published, descriptive of the manners of this country. Any young man who takes it into his head to publish his travels, visits the countries he intends to describe; passes through them with as much inattention as his *valet de chambre*; and consequently not having a fund himself to fill a volume, he applies to those who wrote before him, and gives us the manners of a country, not as he must have seen them, but such as they might have been fifty years before. The modern Dutchman is quite a different creature from him of former times; he in everything imitates a Frenchman but in his easy disengaged air, which is the result of keeping polite company. The Dutchman is vastly ceremonious, and is perhaps exactly what a Frenchman might have been in the reign of Louis XIV. Such are the better-bred. But the downright Hollander is one of the oddest figures in nature. Upon a head of lank hair he wears a half-cocked narrow hat laced

with black ribbon : no coat, but seven waistcoats, and nine pairs of breeches ; so that his hips reach almost up to his armpits. This well-clothed vegetable is now fit to see company, or make love. But what a pleasing creature is the object of his appetite ? Why, she wears a large fur cap with a deal of Flanders lace : for every pair of breeches he carries, she puts on two petticoats.

A Dutch lady burns nothing about her phlegmatic admirer but his tobacco. You must know, Sir, every woman carries in her hand a stove with coals in it, which, when she sits, she snugs under her petticoats ; and at this chimney dozing Strephon lights his pipe. I take it that this continual smoking is what gives the man the ruddy healthful complexion he generally wears, by draining his superfluous moisture, while the woman, deprived of this amusement, overflows with such viscidities as tint the complexion, and give that paleness of visage which low fenny grounds and moist air conspire to cause. A Dutch woman and Scotch will well bear an opposition.

The one is pale and fat, the other lean and ruddy : the one walks as if she were straddling after a go-cart, and the other takes too masculine a stride. I shall not endeavour to deprive either country of its share of beauty ; but must say, that of all objects on this earth, an English farmer's daughter is most charming. Every woman there is a complete beauty, while the higher class of women want many of the requisites to make them even tolerable. Their pleasures here are very dull, though very various. You may smoke, you may doze ; you may go to the Italian comedy, as good an amusement as either of the former. This enter-

tainment always brings in Harlequin, who is generally a magician, and in consequence of his diabolical art performs a thousand tricks on the rest of the persons of the drama, who are all fools. I have seen the pit in a roar of laughter at this humour, when with his sword he touches the glass from which another was drinking. 'T was not his face they laughed at, for that was masked. They must have seen something vastly queer in the wooden sword, that neither I, nor you, Sir, were you there, could see.

In winter, when their canals are frozen, every house is forsaken, and all people are on the ice; sleds, drawn by horses, and skating, are at that time the reigning amusements. They have boats here that slide on the ice, and are driven by the winds. When they spread all their sails, they go more than a mile and a half a minute, and their motion is so rapid the eye can scarcely accompany them. Their ordinary manner of travelling is very cheap and very convenient: they sail in covered boats drawn by horses; and in these you are sure to meet people of all nations. Here the Dutch slumber, the French chatter, and the English play at cards. Any man who likes company may have them to his taste. For my part I generally detached myself from all society, and was wholly taken up in observing the face of the country. Nothing can equal its beauty; wherever I turn my eye, fine houses, elegant gardens, statues, grottos, vistas, presented themselves; but when you enter their towns you are charmed beyond description. No misery is to be seen here; every one is usefully employed.

Scotland and this country bear the highest

contrast. There hills and rocks intercept every prospect; here 't is all a continued plain. There you might see a well-dressed duchess issuing from a dirty close; and here a dirty Dutchman inhabiting a palace. The Scotch may be compared to a tulip planted in dung; but I never see a Dutchman in his own house, but I think of a magnificent Egyptian temple dedicated to an ox. Physic is by no means here taught so well as in Edinburgh; and in all Leyden there are but four British students, owing to all necessaries being so extremely dear, and the professors so very lazy (the chemical professor excepted), that we don't much care to come hither. I am not certain how long my stay here may be; however, I expect to have the happiness of seeing you at Kilmore, if I can, next March.

Direct to me, if I am honoured with a letter from you, to Madam Diallion's at Leyden.

Thou best of men, may Heaven guard and preserve you, and those you love.

To his brother Henry

Family matters

1759.

. . . Imagine to yourself a pale, melancholy visage, with two great wrinkles between the eyebrows, with an eye disgustingly severe, and a big wig; and you may have a perfect picture of my present appearance. On the other hand, I conceive you as perfectly sleek and healthy, passing many a happy day among your own children, or those who knew you a child.

Since I knew what it was to be a man, this is a pleasure I have not known. I have passed my days among a parcel of cool, designing beings, and have contracted all their suspicious manner in my own behaviour. I should actually be as unfit for the society of my friends at home, as I detest that which I am obliged to partake of here. I can now neither partake of the pleasure of a revel, nor contribute to raise its jollity. I can neither laugh nor drink; have contracted a hesitating, disagreeable manner of speaking, and a visage that looks ill-nature itself; in short, I have thought myself into a settled melancholy, and an utter disgust of all that life brings with it. Whence this romantic turn that all our family are possessed with? Whence this love for every place and every country but that in which we reside—for every occupation but our own? this desire of fortune, and yet this eagerness to dissipate? I perceive, my dear sir, that I am at intervals for indulging this splenetic manner, and following my own taste, regardless of yours.

The reasons you have given me for breeding up your son as a scholar are judicious and convincing; I should, however, be glad to know for what particular profession he is designed. If he be assiduous and divested of strong passions (for passions in youth always lead to pleasure), he may do very well in your college; for it must be owned that the industrious poor have good encouragement there, perhaps better than in any other in Europe. But if he has ambition, strong passions, and an exquisite sensibility of contempt, do not send him there, unless you have no other trade for him except your own. It is impossible to conceive how much

may be done by a proper education at home. A boy, for instance, who understands perfectly well Latin, French, Arithmetic, and the principles of the Civil Law, and can write a fine hand, has an education that may qualify him for any undertaking; and these parts of learning should be better inculcated, let him be designed for whatever calling he will.

Above all things let him never touch a romance or novel; these paint beauty in colours more charming than nature, and describe happiness that man never tastes. How delusive, how destructive are those pictures of consummate bliss! They teach the youthful mind to sigh after beauty and happiness that never existed; to despise the little good which fortune has mixed in our cup, by expecting more than she ever gave; and, in general, take the word of a man who has seen the world and who has studied human nature more by experience than precept; take my word for it, that books teach us very little of the world. The greatest merit in a state of poverty would only serve to make the possessor ridiculous—may distress, but cannot relieve him. Frugality, and even avarice, in the lower orders of mankind, are true ambition. These afford the only ladder for the poor to rise to preferment. Teach then, my dear sir, to your son thrift and economy. Let his poor wandering uncle's example be placed before his eyes. I had learned from books to be disinterested and generous, before I was taught from experience the necessity of being prudent. I had contracted the habits and notions of a philosopher, while I was exposing myself to the insidious approaches of cunning: and often by being, even with

my narrow finances, charitable to excess, I forgot the rules of justice, and placed myself in the very situation of the wretch who thanked me for my bounty. When I am in the remotest part of the world, tell him this, and perhaps he may improve from my example. But I find myself again falling into my gloomy habits of thinking.

My mother, I am informed, is almost blind ; even though I had the utmost inclination to return home, under such circumstances I could not, for to behold her in distress without a capacity of relieving her from it, would add much too to my splenetic habit. Your last letter was much too short ; it should have answered some queries I had made in my former. Just sit down as I do, and write forward until you have filled all your paper. It requires no thought, at least from the ease with which my own sentiments rise when they are addressed to you. For, believe me, my head has no share in all I write ; my heart dictates the whole. Pray give my love to Bob Bryanton, and entreat him from me not to drink. My dear sir, give me some account about poor Jenny. Yet her husband loves her : if so, she cannot be unhappy.

I know not whether I should tell you—yet why should I conceal those trifles, or indeed anything from you ? There is a book of mine will be published in a few days : the life of a very extraordinary man ; no less than the great Voltaire. You know already by the title that it is no more than a catch-penny. However, I spent but four weeks on the whole performance, for which I received twenty pounds. When published, I shall take some method of conveying it to you, unless you may think it dear of the postage, which may

amount to four or five shillings. However, I fear you will not find an equivalent of amusement.

Your last letter, I repeat it, was too short; you should have given me your opinion of the design of the heroi-comical poem which I sent you. You remember I intended to introduce the hero of the poem as lying in a paltry ale-house. You may take the following specimen of the manner, which I flatter myself is quite original. The room in which he lies may be described somewhat this way:

The window, patched with paper, lent a ray
That feebly show'd the state in which he lay;
The sandy floor that grits beneath the tread,
The humid wall with paltry pictures spread;
The game of goose was there exposed to view,
And the twelve rules the royal martyr drew;
The Seasons, framed with listing, found a place,
And Prussia's monarch show'd his lamp-black face.
The morn was cold: he views with keen desire
A rusty grate, unconscious of a fire;
An unpaid reckoning on the frieze was scored,
And five crack'd teacups dress'd the chimney board.

And now imagine after his soliloquy, the landlord to make his appearance in order to dun him for the reckoning:

Not with that face, so servile and so gay,
That welcomes every stranger that can pay:
With sulky eye he smoked the patient man,
Then pull'd his breeches tight, and thus began, &c.

All this is taken, you see, from nature. It is a good remark of Montaigne's, that the wisest men often have friends with whom they do not care how much they play the fool. Take my present follies as instances of regard. Poetry is a much easier and more agreeable species of composition

than prose ; and, could a man live by it, it were not unpleasant employment to be a poet. I am resolved to leave no space, though I should fill it up only by telling you, what you very well know already, I mean that I am

Your most affectionate friend and brother.

WILLIAM COWPER

1731-1800

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

Escapade of Puss

21 *Aug.* 1780.

THE following occurrence ought not to be passed over in silence, in a place where so few notable ones are to be met with. Last Wednesday night, while we were at supper, between the hours of eight and nine, I heard an unusual noise in the back parlour, as if one of the hares was entangled, and endeavouring to disengage herself. I was just going to rise from table, when it ceased. In about five minutes, a voice on the outside of the parlour door inquired if one of my hares had got away. I immediately rushed into the next room, and found that my poor favourite Puss had made her escape. She had gnawed in sunder the strings of a lattice work, with which I thought I had sufficiently secured the window, and which I preferred to any other sort of blind, because it admitted plenty of air. From thence I hastened to the kitchen, where I saw the redoubtable Thomas Freeman, who told me, that having seen her, just after she had dropped into the street, he attempted to cover her with his hat, but she screamed out, and leaped directly over his head. I then desired him to pursue as fast as possible, and added Richard Coleman to the chase, as being nimbler, and carry-

ing less weight than Thomas ; not expecting to see her again, but desirous to learn, if possible, what became of her. In something less than an hour, Richard returned, almost breathless, with the following account. That soon after he began to run, he left Tom behind him, and came in sight of a most numerous hunt of men, women, children, and dogs ; that he did his best to keep back the dogs, and presently outstripped the crowd, so that the race was at last disputed between himself and Puss ;—she ran right through the town, and down the lane that leads to Dropshort ; a little before she came to the house, he got the start and turned her ; she pushed for the town again, and soon after she entered it, sought shelter in Mr. Wagstaff's tanyard, adjoining to old Mr. Drake's. Sturges's harvest men were at supper, and saw her from the opposite side of the way. There she encountered the tanpits full of water ; and while she was struggling out of one pit, and plunging into another, and almost drowned, one of the men drew her out by the ears, and secured her. She was then well washed in a bucket to get the lime out of her coat, and brought home in a sack at ten o'clock.

This frolic cost us four shillings, but you may believe we did not grudge a farthing of it. The poor creature received only a little hurt in one of her claws, and in one of her ears, and is now almost as well as ever.

I do not call this an answer to your letter, but such as it is I send it, presuming upon that interest which I know you take in my minutest concerns, which I cannot express better than in the words of Terence a little varied—*Nihil mei a te alienum putas.*

To the Rev. William Unwin

A laugh that hurts nobody

18 *Nov.* 1782.

My dear William,

. . . I little thought when I was writing the history of John Gilpin, that he would appear in print—I intended to laugh, and to make two or three others laugh, of whom you were one. But now all the world laughs, at least if they have the same relish for a tale ridiculous in itself, and quaintly told, as we have.—Well—they do not always laugh so innocently, or at so small an expense—for in a world like this, abounding with subjects for satire, and with satirical wits to mark them, a laugh that hurts nobody has at least the grace of novelty to recommend it. Swift's darling motto was, *Vive la bagatelle*—a good wish for a philosopher of his complexion, the greater part of whose wisdom, whencesoever it came, most certainly came not from above. *La bagatelle* has no enemy in me, though it has neither so warm a friend, nor so able a one, as it had in him. If I trifle, and merely trifle, it is because I am reduced to it by necessity—a melancholy, that nothing else so effectually disperses, engages me sometimes in the arduous task of being merry by force. And, strange as it may seem, the most ludicrous lines I ever wrote have been written in the saddest mood, and, but for that saddest mood, perhaps had never been written at all. To say truth, it would be but a shocking vagary, should the mariners on board a ship buffeted by a terrible storm, employ themselves in fiddling and dancing; yet sometimes much such a part act I. . . .

To the Rev. John Newton

Village politicians

26 *Jan.* 1783.

My dear Friend,

It is reported among persons of the best intelligence at Olney—the barber, the schoolmaster, and the drummer of a corps quartered at this place,—that the belligerent powers are at last reconciled, the articles of the treaty adjusted, and that peace is at the door. I saw this morning, at nine o'clock, a group of about twelve figures very closely engaged in a conference, as I suppose, upon the same subject. The scene of consultation was a blacksmith's shed, very comfortably screened from the wind, and directly opposed to the morning sun. Some held their hands behind them, some had them folded across their bosom, and others had thrust them into their breeches pockets. Every man's posture bespoke a pacific turn of mind; but the distance being too great for their words to reach me, nothing transpired. I am willing, however, to hope that the secret will not be a secret long, and that you and I, equally interested in the event, though not, perhaps, equally well-informed, shall soon have an opportunity to rejoice in the completion of it. The powers of Europe have clashed with each other to a fine purpose; that the Americans, at length declared independent, may keep themselves so, if they can; and that what the parties, who have thought proper to dispute upon that point, have wrested from each other in the course of the conflict, may be, in the issue of it, restored to the

proper owner. Nations may be guilty of a conduct that would render an individual infamous for ever; and yet carry their heads high, talk of their glory, and despise their neighbours. Your opinions and mine, I mean our political ones, are not exactly of a piece, yet I cannot think otherwise upon this subject than I have always done. England, more, perhaps, through the fault of her generals, than her councils, has in some instances acted with a spirit of cruel animosity she was never chargeable with till now. But this is the worst that can be said. On the other hand, the Americans, who, if they had contented themselves with a struggle for lawful liberty, would have deserved applause, seem to me to have incurred the guilt of parricide, by renouncing their parent, by making her ruin their favourite object, and by associating themselves with her worst enemy, for the accomplishment of their purpose. France, and of course Spain, have acted a treacherous, a thievish part. They have stolen America from England, and whether they are able to possess themselves of that jewel or not hereafter, it was doubtless what they intended. Holland appears to me in a meaner light than any of them. They quarrelled with a friend for an enemy's sake. The French led them by the nose, and the English have threshed them for suffering it. My views of the contest being, and having been always such, I have consequently brighter hopes for England than her situation some time since seemed to justify. She is the only injured party. America may, perhaps, call her the aggressor; but if she were so, America has not only repelled the injury, but done a greater. As to the rest, if perfidy, treachery, avarice, and ambition can prove their

cause to have been a rotten one, those proofs are found upon them. I think, therefore, that whatever scourge may be prepared for England, on some future day, her ruin is not yet to be expected.

Acknowledge, now, that I am worthy of a place under the shed I described, and that I should make no small figure among the *quidnuncs* of Olney. . . .

To the same

Village justice

17 *Nov.* 1783.

My dear Friend,

. . . The country around us is much alarmed with apprehensions of fire. Two have happened since that of Olney. One at Hitchin, where the damage is said to amount to eleven thousand pounds, and another, at a place not far from Hitchin, of which I have not learnt the name. Letters have been dropped at Bedford, threatening to burn the town; and the inhabitants have been so intimidated, as to have placed a guard in many parts of it, several nights past. Some madman or some devil has broke loose, who it is to be hoped will pay dear for these effusions of his malignity. Since our conflagration here, we have sent two women and a boy to the justice, for depredation; Sue Riviss, for stealing a piece of beef, which, in her excuse, she said she intended to take care of. This lady, whom you will remember, escaped for want of evidence; not that evidence was indeed wanting, but our men of Gotham judged it unnecessary to send it. With her went the woman I mentioned before, who, it seems, has made some

sort of profession, but upon this occasion allowed herself a latitude of conduct rather inconsistent with it, having filled her apron with wearing apparel, which she likewise intended to take care of. She would have gone to the county gaol, had Billy Raban, the baker's son, who prosecuted, insisted on it, but he good-naturedly, though I think weakly, interposed in her favour, and begged her off. The young gentleman who accompanied these fair ones is the junior son of Molly Boswell. He had stolen some iron-work, the property of Griggs, the butcher. Being convicted, he was ordered to be whipt, which operation he underwent at the cart's tail, from the stone-house to the high arch, and back again. He seemed to show great fortitude, but it was all an imposition upon the public. The beadle, who performed, had filled his left hand with red ochre, through which, after every stroke, he drew the lash of his whip, leaving the appearance of a wound upon the skin, but in reality not hurting him at all. This being perceived by Mr. Constable Hinschcomb, who followed the beadle, he applied his cane, without any such management or precaution, to the shoulders of the too merciful executioner. The scene immediately became more interesting. The beadle could by no means be prevailed upon to strike hard, which provoked the constable to still harder; and this double flogging continued, till a lass of Silver-end, pitying the pitiful beadle thus suffering under the hands of the pitiless constable, joined the procession, and placing herself immediately behind the latter, seized him by his capillary club, and pulling him backwards by the same, slapt his face with a most Amazonian fury. This concatenation

of events has taken up more of my paper than I intended it should, but I could not forbear to inform you how the beadle thrashed the thief, the constable the beadle, and the lady the constable, and how the thief was the only one who suffered nothing. Mr. Teedon has been here, and is gone again. He came to thank me for an old pair of breeches. In answer to our inquiries after his health, he replied that he had a slow fever, which made him take all possible care not to inflame his blood. I admitted his prudence, but in his particular instance could not very clearly discern the need of it. Pump water will not heat him much; and, to speak a little in his own style, more inebriating fluids are to him, I fancy, not very attainable. He brought us news, the truth of which, however, I do not vouch for, that the town of Bedford was actually on fire yesterday, and the flames not extinguished when the bearer of the tidings left it.

Swift observes, when he is giving his reasons why the preacher is elevated always above his hearers, that let the crowd be as great as it will below, there is always room enough overhead. If the French philosophers can carry their art of flying to the perfection they desire, the observation may be reversed, the crowd will be overhead, and they will have most room who stay below. I can assure you, however, upon my own experience, that this way of travelling is very delightful. I dreamt, a night or two since, that I drove myself through the upper regions in a balloon and pair, with the greatest ease and security. Having finished the tour I intended, I made a short turn, and, with one flourish of my whip, descended; my

horses prancing and curvetting with an infinite share of spirit, but without the least danger, either to me or my vehicle. The time, we may suppose, is at hand, and seems to be prognosticated by my dream, when these airy excursions will be universal, when judges will fly the circuit, and bishops their visitations; and when the tour of Europe will be performed with much greater speed, and with equal advantage, by all who travel merely for the sake of having it to say that they have made it.

I beg that you will accept for yourself and yours our unfeigned love, and remember me affectionately to Mr. Bacon, when you see him.

To the same

A candidate's visit

29 *March*, 1784.

My dear Friend,

It being his majesty's pleasure that I should yet have another opportunity to write before he dissolves the parliament, I avail myself of it with all possible alacrity. I thank you for your last, which was not the less welcome for coming, like an extraordinary gazette, at a time when it was not expected.

As when the sea is uncommonly agitated, the water finds its way into creeks and holes of rocks, which in its calmer state it never reaches, in like manner the effect of these turbulent times is felt even at Orchard-side, where in general we live as undisturbed by the political element, as shrimps or cockles that have been accidentally deposited in some hollow beyond the water mark, by the usual

dashing of the waves. We were sitting yesterday after dinner, the two ladies and myself, very composedly, and without the least apprehension of any such intrusion in our snug parlour, one lady knitting, the other netting, and the gentleman winding worsted, when to our unspeakable surprise a mob appeared before the window; a smart rap was heard at the door, the boys halloo'd, and the maid announced Mr. Grenville. Puss was unfortunately let out of her box, so that the candidate, with all his good friends at his heels, was refused admittance at the grand entry, and referred to the back door, as the only possible way of approach.

Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather, I suppose, climb in at a window, than be absolutely excluded. In a minute, the yard, the kitchen, and the parlour, were filled. Mr. Grenville, advancing toward me, shook me by the hand with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he and as many more as could find chairs, were seated, he began to open the intent of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence, which he was not equally inclined to believe, and the less, no doubt, because Mr. Ashburner, the draper, addressing himself to me at this moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my first assertion, by saying, that if I had any I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it consisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr. Grenville squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies, and withdrew. He kissed likewise the maid

in the kitchen, and seemed upon the whole a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentlemen. He has a pair of very good eyes in his head, which not being sufficient as it should seem for the many nice and difficult purposes of a senator, he has a third also, which he wore suspended by a riband from his buttonhole. The boys halloo'd, the dogs barked, Puss scampered, the hero, with his long train of obsequious followers, withdrew. We made ourselves very merry with the adventure, and in a short time settled into our former tranquillity, never probably to be thus interrupted more. I thought myself, however, happy in being able to affirm truly that I had not that influence for which he sued ; and which, had I been possessed of it, with my present views of the dispute between the Crown and the Commons, I must have refused him, for he is on the side of the former. It is comfortable to be of no consequence in a world where one cannot exercise any without disobliging somebody. The town, however, seems to be much at his service, and if he be equally successful throughout the country, he will undoubtedly gain his election. Mr. Ashburner perhaps was a little mortified, because it was evident that I owed the honour of this visit to his misrepresentation of my importance. But had he thought proper to assure Mr. Grenville that I had three heads, I should not I suppose have been bound to produce them. . . .

To Lady Hesketh

An acquaintance reopened

Olney, 9 *Nov.* 1785.

My dearest Cousin,

Whose last most affectionate letter has run in my head ever since I received it, and which I now sit down to answer two days sooner than the post will serve me; I thank you for it, and with a warmth for which I am sure you will give me credit, though I do not spend many words in describing it. I do not seek *new* friends, not being altogether sure that I should find them, but have unspeakable pleasure in being still beloved by an old one. I hope that now our correspondence has suffered its last interruption, and that we shall go down together to the grave, chatting and chirping as merrily as such a scene of things as this will permit.

I am happy that my poems have pleased you. My volume has afforded me no such pleasure at any time, either while I was writing it, or since its publication, as I have derived from yours and my uncle's opinion of it. I make certain allowances for partiality, and for that peculiar quickness of taste, with which you both relish what you like, and after all drawbacks upon those accounts duly made, find myself rich in the measure of your approbation that still remains. But above all, I honour *John Gilpin*, since it was he who first encouraged you to write. I made him on purpose to laugh at, and he served his purpose well; but I am now in debt to him for a more valuable acquisition than all the laughter in the world

amounts to, the recovery of my intercourse with you, which is to me inestimable. My benevolent and generous Cousin, when I was once asked if I wanted anything, and given delicately to understand that the inquirer was ready to supply all my occasions, I thankfully and civilly, but positively, declined the favour. I neither suffer, nor have suffered, any such inconveniences as I had not much rather endure than come under obligations of that sort to a person comparatively with yourself a stranger to me. But to you I answer otherwise. I know you thoroughly, and the liberality of your disposition, and have that consummate confidence in the sincerity of your wish to serve me, that delivers me from all awkward constraint, and from all fear of trespassing by acceptance. To you, therefore, I reply, yes. Whensoever, and whatsoever, and in what mannersoever you please; and add moreover, that my affection for the giver is such as will increase to me tenfold the satisfaction that I shall have in receiving. It is necessary, however, that I should let you a little into the state of my finances, that you may not suppose them more narrowly circumscribed than they are. Since Mrs. Unwin and I have lived at Olney, we have had but one purse, although during the whole of that time, till lately, her income was nearly double mine. Her revenues indeed are now in some measure reduced, and do not much exceed my own; the worst consequence of this is, that we are forced to deny ourselves some things which hitherto we have been better able to afford, but they are such things as neither life, nor the well-being of life, depend upon. My own income has been better than it is, but when

it was best, it would not have enabled me to live as my connexions demanded that I should, had it not been combined with a better than itself, at least at this end of the kingdom. Of this I had full proof during three months that I spent in lodgings at Huntingdon, in which time by the help of good management, and a clear notion of economical matters, I contrived to spend the income of a twelvemonth. Now, my beloved Cousin, you are in possession of the whole case as it stands. Strain no points to your own inconvenience or hurt, for there is no need of it, but indulge yourself in communicating (no matter what) that you can spare without missing it, since by so doing you will be sure to add to the comforts of my life one of the sweetest that I can enjoy--a token and proof of your affection.

I cannot believe but that I should know you, notwithstanding all that time may have done: there is not a feature of your face, could I meet it upon the road, by itself, that I should not instantly recollect. I should say that is my Cousin's nose, or those are her lips and her chin, and no woman upon earth can claim them but herself. As for me, I am a very smart youth of my years; I am not indeed grown grey so much as I am grown bald. No matter: there was more hair in the world than ever had the honour to belong to me; accordingly having found just enough to curl a little at my ears, and to intermix with a little of my own that still hangs behind, I appear, if you see me in an afternoon, to have a very decent head-dress, not easily distinguished from my natural growth, which being worn with a small bag, and a black riband about my neck,

continues to me the charms of my youth, even on the verge of age. Away with the fear of writing too often!

PS. That the view I give you of myself may be complete, I add the two following items—That I am in debt to nobody, and that I grow fat.

To the same

The kindliness of thanks

30 *Nov.* 1785.

My dearest Cousin,

Your kindness reduces me to a necessity (a pleasant one, indeed), of writing all my letters in the same terms: always thanks, thanks at the beginning, and thanks at the end. It is however, I say, a pleasant employment when those thanks are indeed the language of the heart: and I can truly add, that there is no person on earth whom I thank with so much affection as yourself. You insisted that I should give you my genuine opinion of the wine. By the way, it arrived without the least damage or fracture, and I finished the first bottle of it this very day. It is excellent, and though the wine which I had been used to drink was not bad, far preferable to that. The bottles will be in town on Saturday. I am enamoured of the desk and its contents before I see them. They will be most entirely welcome. A few years since I made Mrs. Unwin a present of a snuff-box—a silver one; the purchase was made in London by a friend; it is of a size and form that make it more fit for masculine than feminine use. She therefore with pleasure accepts the box which you

have sent—I should say with the greatest pleasure. And I, discarding the leathern trunk that I have used so long, shall succeed to the possession of hers. She says, Tell Lady Hesketh that I truly love and honour her. Now, my Cousin, you may depend upon it, as a most certain truth, that these words from her lips are not an empty sound. I never in my life heard her profess a regard for any one that she felt not. She is not addicted to the use of such language upon ordinary occasions; but when she speaks it, speaks from the heart. She has baited me this many a day, even as a bear is baited, to send for Dr. Kerr. But, as I hinted to you upon a former occasion, I am as mulish as most men are, and have hitherto most ungallantly refused; but what is to be done now?—If it were uncivil not to comply with the solicitations of one lady, to be unmoved by the solicitations of two would prove me to be a bear indeed. I will, therefore, summon him to consideration of said stomach, and its ailments, without delay, and you shall know the result.—I have read Goldsmith's *Traveller* and his *Deserted Village*, and am highly pleased with them both, as well for the manner in which they are executed, as for their tendency, and the lessons that they inculcate.

Mrs. Unwin said to me a few nights since, after supper, 'I have two fine fowls in feeding, and just fit for use; I wonder whether I should send them to Lady Hesketh?' I replied, Yes, by all means! and I will tell you a story that will at once convince you of the propriety of doing so. My brother was curate on a time to Mr. Fawkes, of Orpington, in Kent: it was when I lived in the Temple. One morning, as I was reading by the fireside, I heard

a prodigious lumbering at the door. I opened it, and beheld a most rural figure, with very dirty boots, and a great coat as dirty. Supposing that my great fame as a barrister had drawn upon me a client from some remote region, I desired him to walk in. He did so, and introduced himself to my acquaintance by telling me that he was the farmer with whom my brother lodged at Orpington. After this preliminary information he unbuttoned his great coat, and I observed a quantity of long feathers projected from an inside pocket. He thrust in his hand, and with great difficulty extricated a great fat capon. He then proceeded to lighten the other side of him, by dragging out just such another, and begged my acceptance of both. I sent them to a tavern, where they were dressed, and I with two or three friends, whom I invited to the feast, found them incomparably better than any fowls we had ever tasted from the London coops. Now, said I to Mrs. Unwin, it is likely that the fowls at Olney may be as good as the fowls at Orpington, therefore send them; for it is not possible to make so good a use of them in any other way. . . . Adieu, my faithful, kind, and consolatory friend!

To the same

Arrival of the desk

7 *Dec.* 1785.

My dear Cousin,

At this time last night I was writing to you, and now I am writing to you again. . . . My dear, you say not a word about the desk in your last, which I received this morning. I infer from

your silence that you supposed it either at Olney or on its way thither, and that you expected nothing so much as that my next would inform you of its safe arrival;—therefore, where can it possibly be? I am not absolutely in despair about it, for the reasons that I mentioned last night; but to say the truth, I stand tottering upon the verge of it. I write, and have written these many years, upon a book of maps, which I now begin to find too low and too flat, though till I expected a better desk, I found no fault with *them*. See and observe how true it is, that by increasing the number of our conveniences, we multiply our wants exactly in the same proportion! neither can I at all doubt that if you were to tell me that all the men in London of any fashion at all, wore black velvet shoes with white roses, and should also tell me that you would send me such, I should dance with impatience till they arrived. Not because I care one farthing of what materials my shoes are made, but because any shoes of your sending would interest me from head to foot.

Thursday Evening.

Oh that this letter had wings, that it might fly to tell you that my desk, the most elegant, the compactest, the most commodious desk in the world, and of all the desks that ever were or ever shall be, the desk that I love the most, is safe arrived. Nay, my dear, it was actually at Sherrington, when the wagoner's wife (for the man himself was not at home) croaked out her abominable *No!* yet she examined the bill of lading, but either did it so carelessly, or as poor Dick Madan used to say, with such an *ignorant eye*, that my name

escaped her. My precious Cousin, you have bestowed too much upon me. I have nothing to render you in return, but the affectionate feelings of a heart most truly sensible of your kindness. How pleasant it is to write upon such a green bank! I am sorry that I have so nearly reached the end of my paper. I have now however only room to say that Mrs. Unwin is delighted with her box, and bids me do more than thank you for it. What can I do more at this distance but say that she loves you heartily, and that so do I? The pocket-book is also the completest that I ever saw, and the watch-chain the most brilliant.

Adieu for a little while. Now for Homer.

N.B.—I generally write the day before the post sets out, which is the thing that puzzles you. I do it that I may secure time for the purpose, and may not be hurried. On this very day twenty-two years ago I left London.

To the same

Anticipations of a visit

Olney, 9 *Feb.* 1786.

My dearest Cousin,

I have been impatient to tell you that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Unwin partakes with me in all my feelings upon this subject, and longs also to see you. I should have told you so by the last post, but have been so completely occupied by this tormenting specimen, that it was impossible to do it. I sent the General a letter on Monday that should distress and alarm him; I sent him another yesterday, that will, I hope,

quiet him again. Johnson has apologized very civilly for the multitude of his friend's strictures; and his friend has promised to confine himself in future to a comparison of me with the original, so that, I doubt not, we shall jog on merrily together. And now, my dear, let me tell you once more, that your kindness in promising us a visit has charmed us both! I shall see you again. I shall hear your voice.. We shall take walks together. I will show you my prospects, the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse and its banks, everything that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn! Mention it not for your life! We have never had so many visitors, but we could easily accommodate them all, though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June, because before that time my greenhouse will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats; and there you shall sit with a bed of mignonette at your side, and a hedge of honeysuckles, roses, and jasmine; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention the country will not be in complete beauty.

And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. Imprimis, as soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box in which have been lodged all my hares, and in which lodges Puss at

present; but he, poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand stands a cupboard, the work of the same author; it was once a dove-cage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table, which I also made; but a merciless servant having scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament; and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the farther end of this superb vestibule, you will find the door of the parlour, into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, unless we should meet her before, and where we will be as happy as the day is long. Order yourself, my Cousin, to the Swan at Newport, and there you shall find me ready to conduct you to Olney.

My dear, I have told Homer what you say about casks and urns, and have asked him whether he is sure that it is a cask in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He swears that it is a cask, and that it will never be anything better than a cask to eternity. So if the god is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so too.

Adieu! my dearest, dearest Cousin.

To the same

Commissions and thanks

The Lodge, 24 *Dec.* 1786.

You must by no means, my dearest Coz, pursue the plan that has suggested itself to you on the supposed loss of your letter. In the first place I choose that my Sundays, like the Sundays of other

people, shall be distinguished by something that shall make me look forward to them with agreeable expectation, and for that reason desire that they may always bring me a letter from you. In the next place, if I know when to *expect* a letter, I know likewise when to *inquire after* a letter, if it happens not to come; a circumstance of some importance, considering how excessively careless they are at the Swan, where letters are sometimes overlooked, and do not arrive at their destination, if no inquiry be made, till some days have passed since their arrival at Olney. It has happened frequently to me to receive a letter long after all the rest have been delivered, and the Padre assured me that Mr. Throckmorton has sent notes three several times to Mrs. Marriot, complaining of this neglect. For these reasons, my dear, thou must write still on Saturdays, and as often on other days as thou pleasest.

The screens came safe, and one of them is at this moment interposed between me and the fire, much to the comfort of my peepers. The other of them being fitted up with a screw that was useless, I have consigned it to proper hands, that it may be made as serviceable as its brother. They are very neat, and I account them a great acquisition. Our carpenter assures me that the lameness of the chairs was not owing to any injury received in their journey, but that the maker never properly finished them. They were not high when they came, and in order to reduce them to a level, we have lowered them an inch. Thou knowest, child, that the short foot could not be lengthened, for which reason we shortened the long ones. The box containing the plate and

the brooms reached us yesterday, and nothing had suffered the least damage by the way. Everything is smart, everything is elegant, and we admire them all. The short candlesticks are short enough. I am now writing with those upon the table; Mrs. U. is reading opposite, and they suit us both exactly. With the money that you have in hand, you may purchase, my dear, at your most convenient time, a tea-urn; that which we have at present having never been handsome, and being now old and patched. A parson once, as he walked across the parlour, pushed it down with his belly, and it never perfectly recovered itself. We want likewise a tea-waiter, meaning, if you please, such a one as you may remember to have seen at the Hall, a wooden one. To which you may add, from the same fund, three or four yards of yard-wide muslin, wherewithal to make neckcloths for my worship. If after all these disbursements anything should be left at the bottom of the purse, we shall be obliged to you if you will expend it in the purchase of silk pocket-handkerchiefs. There, my precious —— I think I have charged thee with commissions in plenty.

You neither must nor shall deny us the pleasure of sending to you such small matters as we do. As to the partridges, you may recollect possibly, when I remind you of it, that I never eat them; they refuse to pass my stomach; and Mrs. Unwin rejoiced in receiving them only because she could pack them away to you—therefore never lay us under any embargoes of this kind, for I tell you beforehand, that we are both incorrigible. My beloved Cousin, the first thing that I open my eyes upon in a morning, is it not the bed in which you

have laid me? Did you not, in our old dismal parlour at Olney, give me the tea on which I breakfast?—the chocolate that I drank at noon, and the table at which I dine?—the everything, in short, that I possess in the shape of convenience, is it not all from you? and is it possible, think you, that we should either of us overlook an opportunity of making such a tiny acknowledgement of your kindness? Assure yourself that never, while my name is Giles Gingerbread, will I dishonour my glorious ancestry, and my illustrious appellation, by so unworthy a conduct. I love you at my heart, and so does Mrs. U., and we must say thank you, and send you a peppercorn when we can. So thank you, my dear, for the brawn and the chine, and for all the good things that you announce, and at present I will, for your sake, say no more of thanksgiving.

To Mrs. Bodham—

His mother's portrait

Weston, 27 *Feb.* 1790.

My dearest Rose,

Whom I thought withered, and fallen from the stalk, but whom I still find alive: nothing could give me greater pleasure than to know it, and to hear it from yourself. I loved you dearly when you were a child, and love you not a jot the less for having ceased to be so. Every creature that bears any affinity to my mother is dear to me, and you, the daughter of her brother, are but one remove distant from her: I love you, therefore, and love you much, both for her sake, and for your

own. The world could not have furnished you with a present so acceptable to me, as the picture which you have so kindly sent me. I received it the night before last, and viewed it with a trepidation of nerves and spirits somewhat akin to what I should have felt, had the dear original presented herself to my embraces. I kissed it, and hung it where it is the last object that I see at night, and, of course, the first on which I open my eyes in the morning. She died when I completed my sixth year; yet I remember her well, and am an ocular witness of the great fidelity of the copy. I remember, too, a multitude of the maternal tendernesses which I received from her, and which have endeared her memory to me beyond expression. There is in me, I believe, more of the Donne than of the Cowper; and though I love all of both names, and have a thousand reasons to love those of my own name, yet I feel the bond of nature draw me vehemently to your side. I was thought in the days of my childhood much to resemble my mother; and in my natural temper, of which at the age of fifty-eight I must be supposed to be a competent judge, can trace both her, and my late uncle, your father. Somewhat of his irritability; and a little, I would hope, both of his and of her —— I know not what to call it, without seeming to praise myself, which is not my intention, but speaking to *you*, I will even speak out, and say *good nature.* Add to all this, I deal much in poetry, as did our venerable ancestor, the Dean of St. Paul's, and I think I shall have proved myself a Donne at all points. The truth is, that whatever I am, I love you all.

EDMUND BURKE

1729-1797

To Matthew Smith

First impressions of London

[1750.]

You'll expect some short account of my journey to this great city. To tell you the truth, I made very few remarks as I rolled along, for my mind was occupied with many thoughts, and my eyes often filled with tears, when I reflected on all the dear friends I left behind; yet the prospects could not fail to attract the attention of the most indifferent: country seats sprinkled round on every side, some in the modern taste, some in the style of old De Coverley Hall, all smiling on the neat but humble cottage; every village as neat and compact as a bee-hive, resounding with the busy hum of industry; and inns like palaces.

What a contrast to our poor country, where you'll scarce find a cottage ornamented with a chimney! But what pleased me most of all was the progress of agriculture, my favourite study, and my favourite pursuit, if Providence had blessed me with a few paternal acres.

A description of London and its natives would fill a volume. The buildings are very fine: it may be called the sink of vice: but its hospitals and charitable institutions, whose turrets pierce the skies like so many electrical conductors, avert the wrath of Heaven. The inhabitants may be divided

into two classes, the *undoers* and the *undone*; generally so, I say, for I am persuaded there are many men of honesty and women of virtue in every street. An Englishman is cold and distant at first; he is very cautious even in forming an acquaintance; he must know you well before he enters into friendship with you; but if he does, he is not the first to dissolve that sacred bond: in short, a real Englishman is one that performs more than he promises; in company he is rather silent, extremely prudent in his expressions, even in politics, his favourite topic. The women are not quite so reserved; they consult their glasses to the best advantage; and as nature is very liberal in her gifts to their persons, and even minds, it is not easy for a young man to escape their glances, or to shut his ears to their softly flowing accents.

As to the state of learning in this city, you know I have not been long enough in it to form a proper judgement of that subject. I don't think, however, there is as much respect paid to a man of letters on this side of the water as you imagine. I don't find that genius, the 'rath primrose, which forsaken dies', is patronized by any of the nobility, so that writers of the first talents are left to the capricious patronage of the public. Notwithstanding discouragement, literature is cultivated in a high degree. Poetry raises her enchanting voice to Heaven. History arrests the wings of Time in his flight to the gulf of oblivion. Philosophy, the queen of arts, and the daughter of Heaven, is daily extending her intellectual empire. Fancy sports on airy wing like a meteor on the bosom of a summer cloud; and even Metaphysics spins her cobwebs, and catches some flies.

The House of Commons not unfrequently exhibits explosions of eloquence that rise superior to those of Greece and Rome, even in their proudest days. Yet, after all, a man will make more by the figures of arithmetic than the figures of rhetoric, unless he can get into the trade wind, and then he may sail secure over Pactolean sands. As to the stage, it is sunk, in my opinion, into the lowest degree; I mean with regard to the trash that is exhibited on it; but I don't attribute this to the taste of the audience, for when Shakespeare warbles his 'native woodnotes', the boxes, pit, and gallery, are crowded—and the gods are true to every word, if properly winged to the heart.

Soon after my arrival in town I visited Westminster Abbey: the moment I entered I felt a kind of awe pervade my mind which I cannot describe; the very silence seemed sacred. Henry VII's chapel is a very fine piece of Gothic architecture, particularly the roof; but I am told that it is exceeded by a chapel in the University of Cambridge. Mrs. Nightingale's monument has not been praised beyond its merit. The attitude and expression of the husband in endeavouring to shield his wife from the dart of death, is natural and affecting. But I always thought that the image of death would be much better represented with an extinguished torch inverted, than with a dart. Some would imagine that all these monuments were so many monuments of folly;—I don't think so; what useful lessons of morality and sound philosophy do they not exhibit! When the high-born beauty surveys her face in the polished Parian, though dumb the marble, yet it tells her that it was placed to guard the remains of as fine

a form, and as fair a face as her own. They show besides how anxious we are to extend our loves and friendships beyond the grave, and to snatch as much as we can from oblivion—such is our natural love of immortality; but it is here that letters obtain the noblest triumphs; it is here that the swarthy daughters of Cadmus may hang their trophies on high; for when all the pride of the chisel and the pomp of heraldry yield to the silent touches of time, a single line, a half-worn-out inscription, remain faithful to their trust. Blest be the man that first introduced these strangers into our islands, and may they never want protection or merit! I have not the least doubt that the finest poem in the English language, I mean Milton's *Il Penseroso*, was composed in the long-resounding aisle of a mouldering cloister or ivy'd abbey. Yet after all do you know that I would rather sleep in the southern corner of a little country churchyard, than in the tomb of the Capulets. I should like, however, that my dust should mingle with kindred dust. The good old expression 'family burying-ground' has something pleasing in it, at least to me.

To James Barry

A friend's infirmities

Gregories, 16 *Sept.* 1769.

My dear Barry,

I am most exceedingly obliged to your friendship and partiality, which attributed a silence very blameable on our parts to a favourable cause: let me add in some measure to its true cause, a

great deal of occupation of various sorts, and some of them disagreeable enough.

As to any reports concerning your conduct and behaviour, you may be very sure they could have no kind of influence here; for none of us are of such a make as to trust to any one's report for the character of a person whom we ourselves know. Until very lately, I had never heard anything of your proceedings from others; and when I did, it was much less than I had known from yourself, that you had been upon ill terms with the artists and virtuosi in Rome, without much mention of cause or consequence. If you have improved these unfortunate quarrels to your advancement in your art, you have turned a very disagreeable circumstance to a very capital advantage. However you may have succeeded in this uncommon attempt, permit me to suggest to you, with that friendly liberty which you have always had the goodness to bear from me, that you cannot possibly have always the same success, either with regard to your fortune or your reputation. Depend upon it, that you will find the same competitions, the same jealousies, the same arts and cabals, the emulations of interest and of fame, and the same agitations and passions here that you have experienced in Italy; and if they have the same effect on your temper, they will have just the same effects upon your interest; and be your merit what it will, you will never be employed to paint a picture. It will be the same at London as at Rome, and the same in Paris as in London, for the world is pretty nearly alike in all its parts; nay, though it would perhaps be a little inconvenient to me, I had a thousand times rather you should fix your residence in Rome than here,

as I should not then have the mortification of seeing with my own eyes a genius of the first rank lost to the world, himself, and his friends; as I certainly must, if you do not assume a manner of acting and thinking here, totally different from what your letters from Rome have described to me.

That you have had just subjects of indignation always, and of anger often, I do no ways doubt; who can live in the world without some trial of his patience? But believe me, my dear Barry, that the arms with which the ill dispositions of the world are to be combated, and the qualities by which it is to be reconciled to us, and we reconciled to it, are moderation, gentleness, a little indulgence to others, and a great deal of mistrust of ourselves; which are not qualities of a mean spirit, as some may possibly think them; but virtues of a great and noble kind, and such as dignify our nature as much as they contribute to our repose and fortune; for nothing can be so unworthy of a well-composed soul, as to pass away life in bickerings and litigations, in snarling and scuffling with every one about us.

Again and again, my dear Barry, we must be at peace with our species; if not for their sakes yet very much for our own. Think what my feelings must be, from my unfeigned regard, and from my wishes that your talents might be of use, when I see what the inevitable consequences must be, of your persevering in what has hitherto been your course, ever since I knew you, and which you will permit me to trace out for you beforehand.

You will come here; you will observe what the artists are doing; and you will sometimes speak a disapprobation in plain words, and sometimes by

a no less expressive silence. By degrees you will produce some of your own works. They will be variously criticized; you will defend them; you will abuse those that have attacked you; expostulations, discussions, letters, possibly challenges, will go forward; you will shun your brethren, they will shun you. In the meantime, gentlemen will avoid your friendship, for fear of being engaged in your quarrels; you will fall into distresses which will only aggravate your disposition for further quarrels; you will be obliged for maintenance to do anything for anybody; your very talents will depart for want of hope and encouragement; and you will go out of the world fretted, disappointed, and ruined.

Nothing but my real regard for you could induce me to set these considerations in this light before you. Remember, we are born to serve and to adorn our country, and not to contend with our fellow-citizens, and that in particular your business is to paint and not to dispute. . . .

If you think this a proper time to leave Rome (a matter which I leave entirely to yourself), I am quite of opinion you ought to go to Venice. Further, I think it right to see Florence and Bologna; and that you cannot do better than to take that route to Venice. In short, do everything that may contribute to your improvement, and I shall rejoice to see you what Providence intended you, a very great man. This you were, in your *ideas*, before you quitted this; you best know how far you have studied, that is, practised the mechanic; despised nothing till you had tried it; practised dissections with your own hands, painted from nature as well as from the statues, and portrait

as well as history, and this frequently. If you have done all this, as I trust you have, you want nothing but a little prudence, to fulfil all our wishes. This, let me tell you, is no small matter ; for it is impossible for you to find any persons anywhere more truly interested for you ; to these dispositions attribute everything which may be a little harsh in this letter. We are, thank God, all well, and all most truly and sincerely yours. I seldom write so long a letter. Take this as a sort of proof how much I am, dear Barry,

Your faithful friend.

To Lord Auckland

An old stag at bay

Beaconsfield, 30 *Oct.* 1795.

My dear Lord,

I am perfectly sensible of the very flattering honour you have done me in turning any part of your attention towards a dejected old man, buried in the anticipated grave of a feeble old age, forgetting and forgotten in an obscure and melancholy retreat.

In this retreat I have nothing relative to this world to do but to study all the tranquillity that in the state of my mind I am capable of. To that end I find it but too necessary to call to my aid an oblivion of most of the circumstances pleasant and unpleasant of my life ; to think as little, and indeed to know as little as I can of everything that is doing about me ; and, above all, to divert my mind from all presagings and prognostications of what I must (if I let my speculations loose) consider as of absolute necessity to happen after

my death, and possibly even before it. Your address to the public which you have been so good as to send to me, obliges me to break in upon that plan, and to look a little on what is behind, and very much on what is before me. It creates in my mind a variety of thoughts, and all of them unpleasant.

It is true, my Lord, what you say, that through our public life, we have generally sailed on somewhat different tacks We have so undoubtedly, and we should do so still, if I had continued longer to keep the sea. In that difference you rightly observe that I have always done justice to your skill and ability as a navigator, and to your good intentions towards the safety of the cargo and of the ship's company. I cannot say now that we are on different tacks. There would be no propriety in the metaphor. I can sail no longer. My vessel cannot be said to be even in port. She is wholly condemned and broken up. To have an idea of that vessel you must call to mind what you have often seen on the Kentish road. Those planks of tough and hardy oak that used for years to brave the buffets of the Bay of Biscay, are now turned with their warped grain and empty trunnion holes into very wretched pales for the enclosure of a wretched farmyard.

The style of your pamphlet, and the eloquence and power of composition you display in it, are such as do great honour to your talents; and in conveying any other sentiments would give me very great pleasure. Perhaps I do not very perfectly comprehend your purpose, and the drift of your arguments. If I do not—pray do not attribute my mistake to want of candour, but to

want of sagacity. I confess your address to the public, together with other accompanying circumstances, has filled me with a degree of grief and dismay which I cannot find words to express. If the plan of politics there recommended, pray excuse my freedom, should be adopted by the King's Councils and by the good people of this kingdom (as so recommended undoubtedly it will) nothing can be the consequence but utter and irretrievable ruin to the Ministry, to the Crown, to the succession, to the importance, to the independence, to the very existence of this country.

This is my feeble perhaps, but clear, positive, decided, long and maturely-reflected, and frequently declared opinion, from which all the events which have lately come to pass, so far from turning me, have tended to confirm beyond the power of alteration, even by your eloquence and authority. I find, my dear Lord, that you think some persons who are not satisfied with the securities of a Jacobin peace, to be persons of intemperate minds. I may be, and I fear I am with you in that description: but pray, my Lord, recollect that very few of the causes which make men intemperate, can operate upon me. Sanguine hopes, vehement desires, inordinate ambition, implacable animosity, party attachments, or party interests; all these with me have no existence. For myself or for a family (alas! I have none), I have nothing to hope or to fear in this world. I am attached by principle, inclination, and gratitude to the King, and to the present Ministry.

Perhaps you may think that my animosity to Opposition is the cause of my dissent on seeing the politics of Mr. Fox (which while I was in the world

I combated by every instrument which God had put into my hands, and in every situation in which I had taken part), so completely adopted in your Lordship's book: but it was with pain I broke with that great man for ever in that cause—and I assure you, it is not without pain that I differ with your Lordship on the same principles. But it is of no concern. I am far below the region of those great and tempestuous passions. I feel nothing of the intemperance of mind. It is rather sorrow and dejection than anger.

Once more my best thanks for your very polite attention, and do me the favour to believe me with the most perfect sentiments of respect and regard, my dear Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient
and humble servant.

To Mary Leadbeater

His last letter[1]

Bath, 23 *May*, 1797.

My dear Mrs. Leadbeater,

I feel as I ought to do your constant hereditary kindness to me and mine. What you have heard of my illness is far from exaggerated. I am, thank God, alive, and that is all. Hastening to my dissolution, I have to bless Providence that I do not suffer a great deal of pain. . . . Mrs. Burke has a tolerable share of health—in every respect except much use of her limbs. She remembers your mother's most good-natured attentions, as I am sure I do with much gratitude. I have ever

[1] Cp. p. 281.

been an admirer of your talents and virtues, and shall ever wish most cordially for everything which can tend to your credit and satisfaction. I therefore congratulate you very heartily on the birth of your son; and pray remember me to the representative of your family, who I hope still keeps up the school of which I have so tender a remembrance; though after so long an absence, and so many unpleasant events of every kind that have distracted my thoughts, I hardly dare ask for any one, not knowing whether they are living or dead, lest I should be the means of awakening unpleasant recollections. Believe me to be, with the most respectful and affectionate regards, my dear Mrs. Leadbeater,

Your faithful friend, and
very humble servant.

PS. Pray remember me to Mr. Leadbeater. I have been at Bath these four months to no purpose, and am therefore to be removed to my own house at Beaconsfield to-morrow, to be nearer to a habitation more permanent, humbly and fearfully hoping that my better part may find a better mansion.

EDWARD GIBBON

1737-1794

To Mrs. Porten

His daily life

Lausanne, 27 *Dec.* 1783.

. . . In speaking of the happiness which I enjoy, you will agree with me in giving the preference to a sincere and sensible friend; and though you cannot discern the full extent of his merit, you will easily believe that Deyverdun is the man. Perhaps two persons so perfectly fitted to live together were never formed by nature and education. We have both read and seen a great variety of objects; the lights and shades of our different characters are happily blended, and a friendship of thirty years has taught us to enjoy our mutual advantages, and to support our unavoidable imperfections. In love and marriage, some harsh sounds will sometimes interrupt the harmony, and in the course of time, like our neighbours, we must expect some disagreeable moments; but confidence and freedom are the two pillars of our union, and I am much mistaken, if the building be not solid and comfortable. . . .

In this season I rise (not at four in the morning) but a little before eight; at nine I am called from my study to breakfast, which I always perform alone, in the English style; and, with the aid of Caplin, I perceive no difference between Lausanne and Bentinck Street. Our mornings are usually passed in separate studies; we never approach

each other's door without a previous message, or thrice knocking; and my apartment is already sacred and formidable to strangers. I dress at half-past one, and at two (an early hour, to which I am not perfectly reconciled) we sit down to dinner. . . . After dinner, and the departure of our company, one, two, or three friends, we read together some amusing book, or play at chess, or retire to our rooms, or make visits, or go to the coffee-house. Between six and seven the assemblies begin, and I am oppressed only with their number and variety. Whist, at shillings or half-crowns, is the game I generally play, and I play three rubbers with pleasure. Between nine and ten we withdraw to our bread and cheese, and friendly converse, which sends us to bed at eleven; but these sober hours are too often interrupted by private or numerous suppers, which I have not the courage to resist, though I practise a laudable abstinence at the best furnished tables. Such is the skeleton of my life. . . .

To Lord Sheffield

A great work

Lausanne, 20 *Jan.* 1787.

. . . As long as I do not inform you of my death, you have good grounds to believe me alive and well. You have a general, and will soon have a more particular idea of my system and arrangement here. One day glides away after another in tranquil uniformity. Every object must have sides and moments less luminous than others; but, upon the whole, the life and the place which

I have chosen are most happily adapted to my character and circumstances: and I can now repeat, at the end of three years, what I soon and sincerely affirmed, that never in a single instant have I repented of my scheme of retirement to Lausanne. . . . And though I truly rejoice in my approaching visit to England, Mr. Pitt, were he your friend and mine, would not find it an easy task to prevent my return. . . .

I am building a great book, which, besides the three stories already exposed to the public eye, will have three stories more before we reach the roof and battlements. You too have built or altered a great Gothic castle with baronial battlements. Did you finish it within the time you intended? As that time drew near, did you not find a thousand nameless and unexpected works that must be performed; each of them calling for a portion of time and labour? and had you not despised, nobly despised, the minute diligence of finishing, fitting up, and furnishing the apartments, you would have discovered a new train of indispensable business. Such, at least, has been my case. A long while ago when I contemplated the distant prospect of my work, I gave you and myself some hopes of landing in England last autumn; but, alas! when autumn grew near, hills began to rise on hills, Alps on Alps, and I found my journey far more tedious and toilsome than I had imagined. When I look back on the length of the undertaking, and the variety of materials, I cannot accuse, or suffer myself to be accused of idleness; yet it appeared that unless I doubled my diligence, another year, and perhaps more, would elapse before I could embark with my

complete manuscript. Under these circumstances I took, and am still executing, a bold and meritorious resolution. The mornings in winter, and in a country of early dinners, are very concise; to them, my usual period of study, I now frequently add the evenings, renounce cards and society, refuse the most agreeable evenings, or perhaps make my appearance at a late supper. By this extraordinary industry, which I never practised before, and to which I hope never to be again reduced, I see the last part of my *History* growing apace under my hands; all my materials are collected and arranged; I can exactly compute, by the square foot, or the square page, all that remains to be done; and after concluding text and notes, after a general review of my time and my ground, I now can decisively ascertain the final period of the *Decline and Fall*, and can boldly promise that I will dine with you at Sheffield Place in the month of August, or perhaps of July, in the present year; within less than a twelvemonth of the term which I had loosely and originally fixed; and perhaps it would not be easy to find a work of that size and importance in which the workman has so tolerably kept his word with himself and the public. But in this situation, oppressed with this particular object, and stealing every hour from my amusement, to the fatigue of the pen, and the eyes, you will conceive, or you might conceive, how little stomach I have for the epistolary style; and that instead of idle, though friendly, correspondence, I think it far more agreeable to employ my time in the effectual measures that may hasten and exhilarate our personal interview. . . .

FRANCES D'ARBLAY

1752–1840

To Susan Burney

An excited Unknown

Chessington, 5 *July*, 1778.

My dearest Susy,

Don't you think there must be some wager depending among the little curled imps who hover over us mortals, of how much flummery goes to turn the head of an authoress? Your last communication very near did my business; for, meeting Mr. Crisp ere I had composed myself, I 'tipt him such a touch of the heroics' as he has not seen since the time when I was so much celebrated for dancing *Nancy Dawson*. I absolutely longed to treat him with one of Captain Mirvan's frolics, and to fling his wig out of the window. I restrained myself, however, from the apprehension that they would imagine I had a universal spite to that harmless piece of goods, which I have already been known to treat with no little indignity. He would fain have discovered the reason of my skittishness; but as I could not tell it him, I was obliged to assure him it would be lost time to inquire further into my flights, since 'true no meaning puzzles more than wit', and therefore, begging the favour of him to 'set me down an *ass*', I suddenly retreated.

My dear, dear Dr. Johnson! what a charming

man you are ! Mrs. Cholmondeley, too, I am not merely prepared but determined to admire ; for really she has shown so much penetration and sound sense of late, that I think she will bring about a union between Wit and Judgement, though their separation has been so long, and though their meetings have been so few.

But, Mrs. Thrale ! she—she is the goddess of my idolatry ! What an *éloge* is hers !—an *éloge* that not only delights at first, but proves more and more flattering every time it is considered !

I often think, when I am counting my laurels, what a pity it would have been had I popped off in my last illness, without knowing what a person of consequence I was !—and I sometimes think that, were I now to have a relapse, I could never go off with so much *éclat* ! I am now at the summit of a high hill ; my prospects on one side are bright, glowing, and invitingly beautiful ; but when I turn round, I perceive, on the other side, sundry caverns, gulfs, pits, and precipices, that, to look at, make my head giddy and my heart sick. I see about me, indeed, many hills of far greater height and sublimity ; but I have not the strength to attempt climbing them ; if I move, it must be downwards. I have already, I fear, reached the pinnacle of my abilities, and therefore to stand still will be my best policy.

But there is nothing under heaven so difficult to do. Creatures who are formed for motion *must* move, however great their inducements to forbear. The wisest course I could take, would be to bid an eternal adieu to writing ; then would the cry be, ''T is pity she does not go on !—she might do something better by and by', &c., &c. *Evelina*, as

a first and a youthful publication, has been received with the utmost favour and lenity; but would a future attempt be treated with the same mercy?—no, my dear Susy, quite the contrary; there would not, indeed, be the same plea to save it; it would no longer be a young lady's *first* appearance in public; those who have met with less indulgence would all peck at any second work; and even those who most encouraged the first offspring might prove enemies to the second, by receiving it with expectations which it could not answer: and so, between either the friends or the foes of the eldest, the second would stand an equally bad chance, and a million of flaws which were overlooked in the former would be ridiculed as villainous and intolerable blunders in the latter.

But, though my eyes ache as I strain them to look forward, the temptations before me are almost irresistible; and what you have transcribed from Mrs. Thrale may, perhaps, prove my destruction.

So you wish to have some of the sayings of the folks here about *the book*? I am sure I owe you all the communications I can possibly give you; but I have nothing new to offer, for the same strain prevails here as in town; and no one will be so obliging to me as to put in a little abuse: so that I fear you will be satiated with the sameness of people's remarks. Yet, what can I do? if they *will* be so disagreeable and tiresome as to be all of one mind, how is it to be helped? I can only advise you to follow my example, which is, to accommodate my philosophy to their insipidity; and in this I have so wonderfully succeeded, that I hear their commendations not merely with patience but even with a degree of pleasure!

Such, my dear Susy, is the effect of true philosophy.

You desire Kitty Cooke's remarks in particular. I have none to give you, for none can I get. To the serious part she indeed listens, and seems to think it may possibly be very fine; but she is quite lost when the Branghtons and Madame Duval are mentioned;—she hears their speeches very composedly, and as words of course; but when she hears them followed by loud bursts of laughter from Hetty, Mr. Crisp, Mrs. Gast, and Mr. Burney, she stares with the gravest amazement, and looks so aghast, and so distressed to know where the joke can be, that I never dare trust myself to look at her for more than an instant. Were she to speak her thoughts, I am sure she would ask why such common things, that pass every day, should be printed? And all the derision with which the party in general treat the Branghtons, I can see she feels herself, with a plentiful addition of astonishment, for the *author*!

By the way, not a human being here has the most remote suspicion of the fact; I could not be more secure, were I literally unknown to them. And there is no end to the ridiculous speeches perpetually made to me, by all of them in turn, though quite by accident.

'An't you sorry this sweet book is done?' said Mrs. Gast.

A silly little laugh was the answer.

'Ah,' said Patty, ''tis the sweetest book!—don't you think so, Miss Burney?'

N.B.—Answer as above.

'Pray, Miss Fan,' says Mrs. Hamilton, 'who wrote it?'

'Really I never heard.'

'Cute enough that, Miss Sukey!

I desired Hetty to miss the verses; for I can't sit them: and I have been obliged to hide the first volume ever since, for fear of a discovery. But I don't know how it will end; for Mrs. Gast has declared she shall buy it, to take it to Burford with her.

To Samuel Crisp

Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson

Streatham, *March* 1779.

The kindness and honours I meet with from this charming family are greater than I can mention; sweet Mrs. Thrale hardly suffers me to leave her a moment; and Dr. Johnson is another Daddy Crisp to me, for he has a partial goodness to your Fannikin, that has made him sink the comparative shortness of our acquaintance, and treat and think of me as one who had long laid claim to him.

If you knew these two you would love them, or I don't know you so well as I think I do. Dr. Johnson has more fun, and comical humour, and love of nonsense about him, than almost anybody I ever saw: I mean when with those he likes; for otherwise, he can be as severe and as bitter as report relates him. Mrs. Thrale has all that gaiety of disposition and lightness of heart, which commonly belong to fifteen. We are, therefore, merry enough, and I am frequently seized with the same tittering and ridiculous fits as those with which I have so often amazed and amused poor Kitty Cooke.

One thing let me not omit of this charming

woman, which I believe will weigh with you in her favour; her political doctrine is so exactly like yours, that it is never started but I exclaim, 'Dear ma'am, if my Daddy Crisp was here, I believe between you, you would croak me mad!' And this sympathy of horrible foresight not a little contributes to incline her to believe the other parts of speech with which I regale her concerning you. She wishes very much to know you, and I am sure you would hit it off comfortably; but I told her what a vile taste you had for shunning all new acquaintance, and shirking almost all your old ones. That I may never be among the latter, heartily hopes my dear daddy's ever affectionate and obliged, F. B.

To Mrs. Lock

A royal commission

Kew, *April* 1789.

My dearest Friends,

I have her Majesty's commands to inquire —whether you have any of a certain breed of poultry?

N.B.—*What* breed I do not remember.

And to say she has just received a small group of the same herself.

N.B.—The quantity I have forgotten.

And to add, she is assured they are something very rare and scarce, and extraordinary and curious.

N.B.—By *whom* she was assured I have not heard.

And to subjoin, that you must send word if you have any of the same sort.

N.B.—How you are to find that out, I cannot tell.

And to mention, as a corollary, that, if you have none of them, and should like to have some, she has a cock and a hen she can spare, and will appropriate them to Mr. Lock and my dearest Fredy.

This conclusive stroke so pleased and exhilarated me, that forthwith I said you would both be enchanted, and so forgot all the preceding particulars.

And I said, moreover, that I knew you would rear them, and cheer them, and fondle them like your children.

So now—pray write a very *fair answer* fairly, in fair hand, and to fair purpose.

My Susanna is just now come—so all is fair with my dearest Mr. and Mrs. Lock's F. B.

GEORGE CRABBE

1754–1832

To Mary Leadbeater [1]

The only survivors

Trowbridge, 1st of 12th month, 1816.

Mary Leadbeater !

Yes, indeed, I do well remember you ! Not Leadbeater then, but a pretty demure lass, standing a timid auditor while her own verses were read by a kind friend, but a keen judge. And I have in my memory your father's person and countenance, and you may be sure that my vanity retained the compliment which he paid me in the moment when he permitted his judgement to slip behind his good humour and desire of giving pleasure. Yes, I remember all who were present, and, of all, are not you and I the only survivors ? It was the day—was it not ?—when I introduced my wife to my friend. And now both are gone ! and your father, and Richard Burke, who was present (yet again I must ask,—was he not ?)—and Mrs. Burke ! All departed, and so, by and by, they will speak of us. But, in the meantime, it was good of you to write, oh, very, very good !

But are you not your father's own daughter ? Do you not flatter after his manner ? How do you know the mischief that you may do in the mind of a vain man, who is but too susceptible of praise, even while he is conscious of so much to be placed

[1] Cp. letter, p. 283.

against it? I am glad that you like my verses: it would have mortified me much if you had not, for you can judge as well as write. . . . Yours are really very admirable things; and the morality is as pure as the literary merit is conspicuous. I am not sure that I have read all that you have given us; but what I have read has really that rare and almost undefinable quality, genius; that is to say, it seizes on the mind and commands attention, and on the heart, and compels its feelings.

How could you imagine that I could be otherwise than pleased—delighted rather—with your letter? And let me not omit the fact that I reply the instant I am at liberty, for I was enrobing myself for church. You are a child of simplicity, I know, and do not love robing; but you are a pupil of liberality, and look upon such things with a large mind, smiling in charity. Well! I was putting on the great black gown when my servant—(you see I can be pompous, to write of gowns and servants with such familiarity)—when he brought me a letter first directed, the words yet legible, to 'George Crabbe, at Belvoir Castle', and then by Lord Mendip to the 'Reverend' at Trowbridge; and at Trowbridge I hope again to receive these welcome evidences of your remembrance, directed in all their simplicity, and written, I trust, in all sincerity. . . .

There was a Suffolk family of Alexanders, one of whom you probably mean; and as he knew very little of me, I see no reason why he should not give me a good character. . . . If it means, as it generally does, that I paid my debts, and was guilty of no glaring world-defying immorality—why yes!—I was so far a good character. . . .

But your motive for writing to me was your desire of knowing whether my men and women were really existing creatures, or beings of my own imagination? Nay, Mary Leadbeater, yours was a better motive; you thought that you should give pleasure by writing, and—yet you will think me very vain—you felt some pleasure yourself in renewing the acquaintance that commenced under such auspices! Am I not right? My heart tells me that I am, and hopes that you will confirm it. Be assured that I feel a very cordial esteem for the friend of my friend,—the virtuous, the worthy character whom I am addressing.

Yes, I will tell you readily about my creatures, whom I endeavoured to paint as nearly as I could, and dared; for in some cases I dared not. This you will readily admit; besides, charity bade me be cautious. Thus far you are correct; there is not one of whom I had not in my mind the original; but I was obliged in some cases to take them from their real situations, in one or two instances to change even the sex, and in many the circumstances. The nearest to real life was the proud ostentatious man in *The Borough*, who disguises an ordinary mind by doing great things; but the others approach to reality at greater or less distances. Indeed, I do not know that I could paint merely from my own fancy, and there is no cause why we should. Is there not diversity sufficient in society? And who can go, even but a little, into the assemblies of our fellow-wanderers from the way of perfect rectitude, and not find characters so varied and so pointed that he need not call upon his imagination?

Will *you* not write again? 'Write *to* thee, or

for the public ', wilt thou not ask? *To* me and *for* as many as love and can discern the union of strength and simplicity, purity and good sense. *Our* feeling and *our* hearts is the language you can adopt. . Alas, *I* cannot with propriety use it—*our* I too could once say; but I am alone now; and since my removing into a busy town among the multitude, the loneliness is but more apparent and more melancholy. But this is only at certain times; and then I have, though at considerable distances, six female friends, unknown to each other, but all dear, very dear, to me. With men I do not much associate; not as deserting, and much less disliking, the male part of society, but as being unfit for it; not hardy nor grave, not knowing enough, nor sufficiently acquainted with the every-day concerns of men. But my beloved creatures have minds with which I can better assimilate. . . . Think of you I must; and of me, I must entreat that you would not be unmindful.

To the same

Comparisons

Trowbridge, 7 *Sept.* 1818.

A description of your village society would be very gratifying to me—how the manners differ from those in larger societies, or in those under different circumstances. I have observed an extraordinary difference in village manners in England, especially between those places otherwise nearly alike, when there was and when there was not a leading man, or a squire's family, or a manufactory near, or a populous, vitiated town, all

these, and many other circumstances have great influence. *Your* quiet village, with such influencing minds, I am disposed to think highly of. No one, perhaps, very rich—none miserably poor. No girls, from six years to sixteen, sent to a factory, where men, women, and children of all ages are continually with them breathing contagion. Not all, however: we are not so evil—there is a resisting power, and it is strong; but the thing itself, the congregation of so many minds, and the intercourse it occasions, will have its powerful and visible effect. But these you have not; yet, as you mention your schools of both kinds, you must be more populous and perhaps not so happy as I was giving myself to believe. . . .

The world has not spoiled you, Mary, I do believe: now it has me. I have been absorbed in its mighty vortex, and gone into the midst of its greatness, and joined in its festivities and frivolities, and been intimate with its children. You may like me very well, my kind friend, while the purifying water, and your more effectual imagination, is between us; but come you to England, or let me be in Ireland, and place us where mind becomes acquainted with mind—and then! Ah, Mary Leadbeater! you would have done with your friendship with me! Child of simplicity and virtue, how can you let yourself be so deceived? Am I not a great fat rector, living upon a mighty income, while my poor curate starves with six hungry children upon the scraps that fall from the luxurious table? Do I not visit that horrible London, and enter into its abominable dissipations? Am not I this day going to dine on venison and drink claret? Have I not been at election dinners,

and joined the Babel-confusion of a town hall? Child of simplicity! am I fit to be a friend to you, and to the peaceful, mild, pure, and gentle people about you? One thing is true—I wish I had the qualification. But I am of the world, Mary. . . .

I return all your good wishes, think of you, and with much regard, more than, indeed, belongs to *a man of the world*! Still, let me be permitted to address thee.—O my dear Mrs. Leadbeater, this is so humble that I am afraid it is vain. Well! write soon, then, and believe me to be

Most sincerely and affectionately yours.

WILLIAM BLAKE

1757-1827

To John Flaxman

Friends 'from eternity'

Felpham, 21 *Sept.* 1800.
Sunday morning.

Dear Sculptor of Eternity,

We are safe arrived at our cottage, which is more beautiful than I thought it, and more convenient. It is a perfect model for cottages, and I think for palaces of magnificence, only enlarging not altering its proportions, and adding ornaments and not principles. Nothing can be more grand than its simplicity and usefulness. Simple without intricacy, it seems to be the spontaneous expression of humanity, congenial to the wants of man. No other formed house can ever please me so well, nor shall I ever be persuaded, I believe, that it can be improved either in beauty or use.

Mr. Hayley received us with his usual brotherly affection. I have begun to work. Felpham is a sweet place for study, because it is more spiritual than London. Heaven opens here on all sides her golden gates: her windows are not obstructed by vapours; voices of celestial inhabitants are more distinctly heard, and their forms more distinctly seen; and my cottage is also a shadow of their houses. My wife and sister are both well, courting Neptune for an embrace.

Our journey was very pleasant; and though we had a great deal of luggage, no grumbling. All was cheerfulness and good humour on the road, and yet we could not arrive at our cottage before half-past eleven at night, owing to the necessary shifting of our luggage from one chaise to another; for we had seven different chaises and as many different drivers. We set out between six and seven in the morning of Thursday, with sixteen heavy boxes and portfolios full of prints.

And now begins a new life, because another covering of earth is shaken off. I am more famed in heaven for my works than I could well conceive. In my brain are studies and chambers filled with books and pictures of old, which I wrote and painted in ages of eternity before my mortal life; and those works are the delight and study of archangels. Why then should I be anxious about the riches or fame of mortality? The Lord our Father will do for us and with us according to His divine will, for our good.

You, O dear Flaxman! are a sublime archangel,—my friend and companion from eternity. In the divine bosom is our dwelling-place. I look back into the regions of reminiscence, and behold our ancient days before this earth appeared in its vegetated mortality to my mortal vegetated eyes. I see our houses of eternity which can never be separated, though our mortal vehicles should stand at the remotest corners of heaven from each other.

Farewell, my best friend! Remember me and my wife in love and friendship to our dear Mrs. Flaxman, whom we ardently desire to entertain beneath our thatched roof of rusted gold.

To Thomas Butts

Trouble in the path

Felpham, 10 *Jan.* 1802.

Dear Sir,

Your very kind and affectionate letter, and the many kind things you have said in it, called upon me for an immediate answer. But it found my wife and myself so ill, and my wife so very ill, that till now I have not been able to do this duty. The ague and rheumatism have been almost her constant enemies, which she has combated in vain almost ever since we have been here, and her sickness is always my sorrow, of course. But what you tell me about your sight afflicted me not a little, and that about your health, in another part of your letter, makes me entreat you to take due care of both. It is a part of our duty to God and man to take due care of His gifts; and though we ought not to think *more* highly of ourselves, yet we ought to think *as* highly of ourselves as immortals ought to think.

When I came down here, I was more sanguine than I am at present; but it was because I was ignorant of many things which have since occurred, and chiefly the unhealthiness of the place. Yet I do not repent of coming on a thousand accounts; and Mr. Hayley, I doubt not, will do ultimately all that both he and I wish—that is, to lift me out of difficulty. But this is no easy matter to a man who, having spiritual enemies of such formidable magnitude, cannot expect to want natural hidden ones.

Your approbation of my pictures is a multitude to me, and I doubt not that all your kind wishes in my behalf shall in due time be fulfilled. Your

kind offer of pecuniary assistance I can only thank you for at present, because I have enough to serve my present purpose here. Our expenses are small, and our incôme, from our incessant labour, fully adequate to these at present. I am now engaged in engraving six small plates for a new edition of Mr. Hayley's *Triumphs of Temper*, from drawings by Maria Flaxman, sister to my friend the sculptor. And it seems that other things will follow in course, if I do but copy these well. But patience ! If great things do not turn out, it is because such things depend on the spiritual and not on the natural world ; and if it was fit for me, I doubt not that I should be employed in greater things ; and when it is propei, my talents shall be properly exercised in public, as I hope they are now in private. For till then I leave no stone unturned, and no path unexplored that leads to improvement in my beloved arts. One thing of real consequence I have accomplished by coming into the country, which is to me consolation enough : namely, I have re-collected all my scattered thoughts on art, and resumed my primitive and original ways of execution in both painting and engraving, which in the confusion of London I had very much lost and obliterated from my mind. But whatever becomes of my labours, I would rather that they should be preserved in your greenhouse (not, as you mistakenly call it, dunghill) than in the cold gallery of fashion. The sun may yet shine, and then they will be brought into open air.

But you have so generously and openly desired that I will divide my griefs with you that I cannot hide what it has now become my duty to explain. My unhappiness has arisen from a source which,

if explored too narrowly, might hurt my pecuniary circumstances ; as my dependence is on engraving at present, and particularly on the engravings I have in hand for Mr. Hayley, and I find on all hands great objections to my doing anything but the mere drudgery of business, and intimations that, if I do not confine myself to this, I shall not live. This has always pursued me. You will understand by this the source of all my uneasiness. This from Johnson and Fuseli brought me down here, and this from Mr. Hayley will bring me back again. For that I cannot live without doing my duty to lay up treasures in heaven is certain and determined, and to this I have long made up my mind. And why this should be made an objection to me, while drunkenness, lewdness, gluttony, and even idleness itself, does not hurt other men, let Satan himself explain. The thing I have most at heart—more than life, or all that seems to make life comfortable without—is the interest of true religion and science. And whenever anything appears to affect that interest (especially if I myself omit any duty to my station as a soldier of Christ), it gives me the greatest of torments. I am not ashamed, afraid, or averse to tell you what ought to be told—that I am under the direction of messengers from heaven, daily and nightly. But the nature of such things is not, as some suppose, without trouble or care. Temptations are on the right hand and on the left. Behind, the sea of time and space roars and follows swiftly. He who keeps not right onwards is lost ; and if our footsteps slide in clay, how can we do otherwise than fear and tremble ? But I should not have troubled you with this account of my

spiritual state, unless it had been necessary in explaining the actual cause of my uneasiness, into which you are so kind as to inquire: for I never obtrude such things on others unless questioned, and then I never disguise the truth. But if we fear to do the dictates of our angels, and tremble at the tasks set before us; if we refuse to do spiritual acts because of natural fears or natural desires; who can describe the dismal torments of such a state!—I too well remember the threats I heard!—'If you, who are organized by Divine Providence for spiritual communion, refuse, and bury your talent in the earth, even though you should want natural bread,—sorrow and desperation pursue you through life, and after death shame and confusion of face to eternity. Every one in eternity will leave you, aghast at the man who was crowned with glory and honour by his brethren, and betrayed their cause to their enemies. You will be called the base Judas who betrayed his friend!'—Such words would make any stout man tremble, and how then could I be at ease? But I am now no longer in that state, and now go on again with my task, fearless though my path is difficult. I have no fear of stumbling while I keep it.

My wife desires her kindest love to Mrs. Butts, and I have permitted her to send it to you also. We often wish that we could unite again in society, and hope that the time is not distant when we shall do so, being determined not to remain another winter here, but to return to London.

I hear a Voice you cannot hear, that says
I must not stay,
I see a Hand you cannot see, that beckons
me away.

Naked we came here—naked of natural things—and naked we shall return: but while clothed with the Divine mercy, we are richly clothed in spiritual, and suffer all the rest gladly. Pray, give my love to Mrs. Butts and your family.

PS. Your obliging proposal of exhibiting my two pictures likewise calls for my thanks; I will finish the others, and then we shall judge of the matter with certainty.

To the same

The wonderful poem

(Felpham), 25 *April*, 1803.

My dear Sir,

I write in haste, having received a pressing letter from my Brother. I intended to have sent the Picture of the *Riposo*, which is nearly finished much to my satisfaction, but not quite. You shall have it soon. I now send the four numbers for Mr. Birch with best respects to him. The reason the *Ballads* have been suspended is the pressure of other business, but they will go on again soon.

Accept of my thanks for your kind and heartening letter. You have faith in the endeavours of me, your weak brother and fellow-disciple; how great must be your faith in our Divine Master! You are to me a lesson of humility, while you exalt me by such distinguishing commendations. I know that you see certain merits in me, which, by God's grace, shall be made fully apparent and perfect in Eternity. In the meantime I must not bury the talents in the earth, but do my endeavour

to live to the glory of our Lord and Saviour; and I am also grateful to the kind hand that endeavours to lift me out of despondency, even if it lifts me too high.

And now, my dear Sir, congratulate me on my return to London with the full approbation of Mr. Hayley and with promise. But alas! now I may say to you—what perhaps I should not dare to say to anyone else—that I can alone carry on my visionary studies in London unannoyed, and that I may converse with my friends in Eternity, see visions, dream dreams, and prophesy and speak parables, unobserved, and at liberty from the doubts of other mortals: perhaps doubts proceeding from kindness; but doubts are always pernicious, especially when we doubt our friends. Christ is very decided on this point: 'He who is not with me is against me.' There is no medium or middle state; and if a man is the enemy of my spiritual life while he pretends to be the friend of my corporeal, he is a real enemy; but the man may be the friend of my spiritual life while he seems the enemy of my corporeal, though not vice versa.

What is very pleasant, every one who hears of my going to London again applauds it as the only course for the interest of all concerned in my works; observing that I ought not to be away from the opportunities London affords of seeing fine pictures, and the various improvements in works of art going on in London.

But none can know the spiritual acts of my three years' slumber on the banks of Ocean, unless he has seen them in the spirit, or unless he should read my long Poem descriptive of those acts; for I have

in these years composed an immense number of verses on one grand theme, similar to Homer's *Iliad* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*; the persons and machinery entirely new to the inhabitants of earth (some of the persons excepted). I have written this Poem from immediate dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time, without premeditation, and even against my will. The time it has taken in writing was thus rendered non-existent, and an immense Poem exists which seems to be the labour of a long life, all produced without labour or study. I mention this to show you what I think the grand reason of my being brought down here.

I have a thousand and ten thousand things to say to you. My heart is full of futurity. I perceive that the sore travail which has been given me these three years leads to glory and honour. I rejoice and tremble: 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made.' I had been reading the CXXXIX Psalm a little before your letter arrived. I take your advice. I see the face of my Heavenly Father: He lays His hand upon my head, and gives a blessing to all my work. Why should I be troubled? Why should my heart and flesh cry out? I will go on in the strength of the Lord; through Hell will I sing forth His praises: that the dragons of the deep may praise Him, and that those who dwell in darkness, and in the sea coasts may be gathered into His Kingdom. Excuse my perhaps too great enthusiasm. Please to accept of and give our loves to Mrs. Butts and your amiable family, and believe me ever yours affectionately.

To the same

The poet and William Hayley

Felpham, 6 *July*, 1803.

. . . We look forward every day with pleasure toward our meeting again in London with those whom we have learned to value by absence no less perhaps than we did by presence ; for recollection often surpasses everything. Indeed, the prospect of returning to our friends is supremely delightful. Then, I am determined that Mrs. Butts shall have a good likeness of you, if I have hands and eyes left ; for I am become a likeness-taker, and succeed admirably well. But this is not to be achieved without the original sitting before you for every touch, all likenesses from memory being necessarily very, very defective ; but Nature and Fancy are two things, and can never be joined, neither ought any one to attempt it, for it is idolatry, and destroys the Soul.

I ought to tell you that Mr. H. is quite agreeable to our return, and that there is all the appearance in the world of our being fully employed in engraving for his projected works, particularly Cowper's *Milton*—a work now on foot by subscription, and I understand that the subscription goes on briskly. This work is to be a very elegant one, and to consist of all Milton's Poems with Cowper's Notes, and translations by Cowper from Milton's Latin and Italian poems. These works will be ornamented with engravings from designs by Romney, Flaxman, and your humble servant, and to be engraved also by the last-mentioned. The profits of the work are intended to be appropriated

to erect a monument to the memory of Cowper in St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey. Such is the project; and Mr. Addington and Mr. Pitt are both among the subscribers, which are already numerous and of the first rank. The price of the work is six guineas. Thus I hope that all our three years' trouble ends in good-luck at last, and shall be forgot by my affections, and only remembered by my understanding, to be a memento in time to come, and to speak to future generations by a sublime allegory, which is now perfectly completed into a grand Poem. I may praise it, since I dare not pretend to be any other than the secretary; the authors are in Eternity. I consider it as the grandest Poem that this world contains. Allegory addressed to the intellectual powers, while it is altogether hidden from the corporeal understanding, is my definition of the most sublime Poetry. It is also somewhat in the same manner defined by Plato. This Poem shall, by Divine assistance, be progressively printed and ornamented with prints, and given to the public. But of this work I take care to say little to Mr. H., since he is as much averse to my Poetry as he is to a chapter in the Bible. He knows that I have writ it, for I have shown it to him, and he has read part by his own desire, and has looked with sufficient contempt to enhance my opinion of it. But I do not wish to imitate by seeming too obstinate in poetic pursuits. But if all the world should set their faces against this, I have orders to set my face like a flint (Ezek. iii. 8) against their faces, and my forehead against their foreheads.

As to Mr. H., I feel myself at liberty to say as follows upon this ticklish subject. I regard fashion

in Poetry as little as I do in Painting: so, if both Poets and Painters should alternately dislike (but I know the majority of them will not), I am not to regard it at all. But Mr. H. approves of my Designs as little as he does of my Poems, and I have been forced to insist on his leaving me, in both, to my own self-will; for I am determined to be no longer pestered with his genteel ignorance and polite disapprobation. I know myself both Poet and Painter, and it is not his affected contempt that can move to anything but a more assiduous pursuit of both arts. Indeed, by my late firmness, I have brought down his affected loftiness, and he begins to think I have some genius: as if genius and assurance were the same thing! But his imbecile attempts to depress me only deserve laughter. I say thus much to you, knowing that you will not make a bad use of it. But it is a fact too true that, if I had only depended on mortal things, both myself and my wife must have been lost. I shall leave every one in this country astonished at my patience and forbearance of injuries upon injuries; and I do assure you that, if I could have returned to London a month after my arrival here, I should have done so. But I was commanded by my spiritual friends to bear all and be silent, and to go through all without murmuring, and, in fine, to hope till my three years should be almost accomplished; at which time I was set at liberty to remonstrate against former conduct, and to demand justice and truth; which I have done in so effectual a manner that my antagonist is silenced completely, and I have compelled what should have been of freedom—my just right as an artist and as a man. And if any attempt should be made to

refuse me this, I am inflexible, and will relinquish any engagement of designing at all, unless altogether left to my own judgement, as you, my dear friend, have always left me; for which I shall never cease to honour and respect you.

When we meet, I will perfectly describe to you my conduct and the conduct of others towards me, and you will see that I have laboured hard indeed, and have been borne on angels' wings. Till we meet I beg of God our Saviour to be with you and me, and yours and mine. Pray give my and my wife's love to Mrs. Butts and family, and believe me to remain

Yours in truth and sincerity.

MARY LEADBEATER

1758-1826

To Edmund Burke

Reply to his last letter

28 *May*, 1797.

With a heart melted to overflowing, I cannot restrain the attempt to express my grateful sensations on receiving the greatest, and, alas! I fear, the last proof of that unvarying friendship with which our ever-loved, our ever-honoured friend has favoured us! I may transgress the bounds by intruding at this awful period; but I cannot help it. My affection and my sorrow will be excused, I believe, for thou hast ever looked kindly and partially upon me, and so has thy beloved wife, with whose feelings I sympathize, could that avail. This day's post brought me thy letter of the 23rd instant, dictated and signed by thee. Such attention, at such a time, and in such a situation! It was like Edmund Burke! It was like few others, but it is not bestowed upon hearts who do not feel it.—I look back on that friendship formed in the precious days of innocent childhood, between thee and my lamented parent.—I trace its progress, which is so imprinted on my mind, that I almost seem to myself to have been a witness to it.—I see it continue unabated, notwithstanding the different sphere of life in which you moved, to the period of it;—and may we not hope that there is an union

of souls beyond the grave? (The composure and fortitude displayed in thy letter, is the greatest consolation we could receive with the tidings it conveyed of thy health.) Since thou dost not allow us to hope for its restoration, we will hope better things than is in the power of this world to bestow.—My mother appears to decline, and looks to the end of her race as near. All the other branches of this family, I believe, are well in health. My brother continues the school, which, I believe, was never in higher estimation than at present. My husband regrets very much that he never shared with us the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with thee. We all unite in cordial, unaffected love to thee. I thought I would say how we were, believing thou would be pleased to hear of our welfare, though how long that may be continued, seems doubtful.—The general fermentation throughout this nation, forebodes some sudden and dreadful eruption, and, however obscure or retired our situations may be, there is little prospect of escaping the calamity. This may cause us to admire, nay, adore the mercy, as well as wisdom of Him, who gives and takes life, in removing those so dear to us from the evil to come. My mother desires thou may accept as much love as she is capable of sending thee; her heart is full of it towards thee; and she bids me say, she hopes thou hast lived such a life, that thy end will be crowned with peace! So be it, with my whole heart! Thy affectionate and obliged friend.

Our best-wishes, and dear love to thy wife.

Abraham Shackleton has the melancholy satisfaction of perusing dear Edmund Burke's account of his poor state of health. He hopes (trusts) that

a quiet resting place is prepared for him. The memory of E. Burke's philanthropic virtues will out-live the period when his shining political talents will cease to act. New fashions of political sentiment will exist; but philanthropy,—*immortale manet!*

To George Crabbe

She writes to remind him

Ballitore, 7th of Eleventh-month, 1816.

I BELIEVE it will surprise George Crabbe to receive a letter from an entire stranger, whom most probably he does not remember to have ever seen or heard of, but who cannot forget having met him at the house of Edmund Burke, Charles Street, James's Square, in the year 1784. I was brought thither by my father, Richard Shackleton, the friend from their childhood of Edmund Burke. My dear father told thee that Goldsmith's would now be the *deserted village*; perhaps thou dost not remember this compliment, but I remember the ingenuous modesty which disclaimed it. He admired '*The Village*', '*The Library*,' and '*The Newspaper*' exceedingly, and the delight with which he read them to his family could not but be acceptable to the author, had he known the sound judgement and the exquisite taste which that excellent man possessed. But he saw no more of the productions of the Muse he admired, whose originality was not the least charm. He is dead—the friend whom he loved and honoured, and to whose character thou dost so much justice in the preface to '*The Parish*

Register', is also gone to the house appointed for all living. A splendid constellation of poets arose in the literary horizon; I looked around for Crabbe. Why does not he, who shines as brightly as any of these, add his lustre? I had not long thought thus when, in an Edinburgh Review, I met with reflections similar to my own, which introduced '*The Parish Register*'. Oh, it was like the voice of a long-lost friend, and glad was I to hear that voice again in '*The Borough*'!—still more in '*The Tales*,' which appear to me excelling all that preceded them! Every work is so much in unison with our own feelings, that a wish for information concerning them and their author is strongly excited.

One of our friends, Dykes Alexander, who was in Ballitore in 1810, I think, said he was personally acquainted with thee, and spoke highly of thy character. I regretted I had not an opportunity of conversing with him on this subject, as perhaps he would have been able to decide arguments which have arisen; namely, whether we owe to truth or to fiction that 'ever new delight' which thy poetry affords us. The characters, however singular some of them may be, are never unnatural, and thy sentiments so true to domestic and social feelings, as well as to those of a higher nature, have the convincing power of reality over the mind, and *I* maintain that all thy pictures *are drawn from life*. To inquire whether this be the case is the excuse which I make to myself for writing this letter. I wish the excuse may be accepted by thee, for I greatly fear I have taken an unwarrantable liberty in making the inquiry. Though advanced in life, yet from an education of peculiar simplicity, and

from never having been long absent from my retired native village, I am too little acquainted with decorum. If I have now transgressed the rules it prescribes, I appeal to the candour and liberality of thy mind to forgive a fault caused by a strong enthusiasm.

PS. Ballitore is the village in which Edmund Burke was educated by Abraham Shackleton, whose pupil he became in 1741, and from whose school he entered the college of Dublin in 1744. The school is still flourishing.

ROBERT BURNS

1759-1796

To Miss Chalmers

Marriage with Jean

Ellisland, near Dumfries, 16 *Sept.* 1788.

Where are you? and how are you? and is Lady M'Kenzie recovering her health? for I have had but one solitary letter from you. I will not think you have forgot me, Madam; and for my part—

When thee, Jerusalem, I forget,
Skill part from my right hand!

'My heart is not of that rock, nor my soul careless as that sea.' I do not make my progress among mankind as a bowl does among its fellows—rolling through the crowd without bearing away any mark or impression, except where they hit in hostile collision.

I am here, driven in with my harvest-folks by bad weather; and as you and your sister once did me the honour of interesting yourselves much *à l'égard de moi*, I sit down to beg the continuation of your goodness.—I can truly say that, all the exterior of life apart, I never saw two, whose esteem flattered the nobler feelings of my soul—I will not say, more, but so much as Lady M'Kenzie and Miss Chalmers. When I think of you—hearts the best, minds the noblest, of human kind—unfortunate, even in the shades of life—when

I think I have met with you, and have lived more of real life with you in eight days, than I can do with almost any body I meet with in eight years—when I think on the improbability of meeting you in this world again—I could sit down and cry like a child!—If ever you honoured me with a place in your esteem, I trust I can now plead more desert.—I am secure against that crushing grip of iron poverty, which, alas! is less or more fatal to the native worth and purity of, I fear, the noblest souls; and a late, important step in my life has kindly taken me out of the way of those ungrateful iniquities, which, however overlooked in fashionable license, or varnished in fashionable phrase, are indeed but lighter and deeper shades of VILLAINY.

Shortly after my last return to Ayrshire, I married 'my Jean'. This was not in consequence of the attachment of romance perhaps; but I had a long and much-loved fellow creature's happiness or misery in my determination, and I durst not trifle with so important a deposit. Nor have I any cause to repent it. If I have not got polite tattle, modish manners, and fashionable dress, I am not sickened and disgusted with the multiform curse of boarding-school affectation; and I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the county. Mrs. Burns believes, as firmly as her creed, that I am *le plus bel esprit, et le plus honnête homme* in the universe; although she scarcely ever in her life, except the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and the Psalms of David in metre, spent five minutes together on either prose or verse.

I must except also from this last, a certain late publication of Scots poems, which she has perused very devoutly; and all the ballads in the country, as she has (O the partial lover! you will cry) the finest 'wood-note wild' I ever heard.—I am the more particular in this lady's character, as I know she will henceforth have the honour of a share in your best wishes. She is still at Mauchline, as I am building my house; for this hovel that I shelter in, while occasionally here, is pervious to every blast that blows, and every shower that falls; and I am only preserved from being chilled to death, by being suffocated with smoke. I do not find my farm that pennyworth I was taught to expect, but I believe, in time, it may be a saving bargain. You will be pleased to hear that I have laid aside idle *éclat*, and bind every day after my reapers.

To save me from that horrid situation of at any time going down, in a losing bargain of a farm, to misery, I have taken my excise instructions, and have my commission in my pocket for any emergency of fortune. If I could set *all* before your view, whatever disrespect you in common with the world, have for this business, I know you would approve of my idea.

I will make no apology, dear Madam, for this egotistic detail: I know you and your sister will be interested in every circumstance of it. What signify the silly, idle gewgaws of wealth, or the ideal trumpery of greatness! When fellow partakers of the same nature fear the same God, have the same benevolence of heart, the same nobleness of soul, the same detestation at every thing dishonest, and the same scorn at every thing

unworthy—if they are not in the dependance of absolute beggary, in the name of common sense are they not EQUALS ? And if the bias, the instinctive bias of their souls run the same way, why may they not be FRIENDS ? . . .

To Mr. Robert Ainslie

A gauger

Ellisland, 1 *Nov.* 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I had written you long ere now, could I have guessed where to find you, for I am sure you have more good sense than to waste the precious days of vacation time in the dirt of business and Edinburgh. Wherever you are, God bless you, and lead you not into temptation, but deliver you from evil !

I do not know if I have informed you that I am now appointed to an excise division, in the middle of which my house and farm lie. In this I was extremely lucky. Without ever having been an expectant, as they call their journeymen excisemen, I was directly planted down to all intents and purposes an officer of excise ; there to flourish and bring forth fruits—worthy of repentance.

I know not how the word exciseman, or still more opprobrious, gauger, will sound in your ears. I too have seen the day when my auditory nerves would have felt very delicately on this subject ; but a wife and children are things which have a wonderful power in blunting these kind of sensations. Fifty pounds a year for life, and a provision for widows and orphans, you will allow

is no bad settlement for a *poet*. For the ignominy of the profession, I have the encouragement which I once heard a recruiting sergeant give to a numerous, if not a respectable audience, in the streets of Kilmarnock.—'Gentlemen, for your further and better encouragement, I can assure you that our regiment is the most blackguard corps under the crown, and consequently with us an honest fellow has the surest chance for preferment.'

You need not doubt that I find several very unpleasant and disagreeable circumstances in my business; but I am tired with and disgusted at the language of complaint against the evils of life. Human existence in the most favourable situations does not abound with pleasures, and has its inconveniences and ills; capricious foolish man mistakes these inconveniences and ills as if they were the peculiar property of his particular situation; and hence that eternal fickleness, that love of change, which has ruined, and daily does ruin many a fine fellow, as well as many a blockhead; and is, almost without exception, a constant source of disappointment and misery. . . .

To Francis Grose

Witch tales

Dumfries, 1792.

Among the many witch stories I have heard relating to Alloway Kirk, I distinctly remember only two or three.

Upon a stormy night, amid whistling squalls of wind and bitter blasts of hail—in short, on such

a night as the devil would choose to take the air in—a farmer, or farmer's servant, was plodding and plashing homeward, with his plough irons on his shoulder, having been getting some repairs on them at a neighbouring smithy. His way lay by the Kirk of Alloway, and being rather on the anxious look-out in approaching a place so well known to be a favourite haunt of the devil and the devil's friends and emissaries, he was struck aghast by discovering through the horrors of the storm and stormy night a light, which, on his nearer approach, plainly showed itself to proceed from the haunted edifice. Whether he had been fortified from above, on his devout supplication, as is customary with people when they suspect the immediate presence of Satan; or whether, according to another custom, he had got courageously drunk at the smithy, I will not pretend to determine; but so it was that he ventured to go up to, nay, into, the very kirk. As luck would have it, his temerity came off unpunished.

The members of the infernal junto were all out on some midnight business or other, and he saw nothing but a kind of kettle or cauldron, depending from the roof over the fire, simmering some heads of unchristened children, limbs of executed malefactors, &c., for the business of the night. It was in for a penny, in for a pound, with the honest ploughman; so, without ceremony, he unhooked the cauldron from off the fire, and pouring out the damnable ingredients, inverted it on his head, and carried it fairly home, where it remained long in the family, a living evidence of the truth of the story.

Another story, which I can prove to be equally

authentic, was as follows: On a market day, in the town of Ayr, a farmer from Carrick, and consequently whose way lay by the very gate of Alloway Kirkyard, in order to cross the river Doon at the old bridge, which is about two or three hundred yards further on than the said gate, had been detained by his business, till by the time he reached Alloway it was the wizard hour between night and morning.

Though he was terrified with a blaze streaming from the kirk, yet as it is a well-known fact that to turn back on these occasions is running by far the greatest risk of mischief, he prudently advanced on his road. When he had reached the gate of the kirkyard he was surprised and entertained through the ribs and arches of an old Gothic window which still faces the highway, to see a dance of witches, merrily footing it round their old sooty blackguard master, who was keeping them all alive with the power of his bagpipe. The farmer, stopping his horse to observe them a little, could plainly descry the faces of many old women of his acquaintance and neighbourhood. How the gentleman was dressed tradition does not say, but that the ladies were all in their smocks; and one of them, happening unluckily to have a smock which was considerably too short to answer all the purposes of that piece of dress, our farmer was so tickled that he involuntarily burst out with a loud laugh: 'Weel luppen, Maggy wi' the short sark!' and recollecting himself, instantly spurred his horse to the top of his speed. I need not mention the universally known fact, that no diabolical power can pursue you beyond the middle of a running stream. Lucky it was for the poor farmer

that the river Doon was so near, for, notwithstanding the speed of his horse, which was a good one, against he reached the middle of the arch of the bridge, and consequently the middle of the stream, the pursuing vengeful hags were so close at his heels, that one of them actually sprang to seize him ; but it was too late, nothing was on her side of the stream but the horse's tail, which immediately gave way at her infernal grip, as if blasted by a stroke of lightning ; but the farmer was beyond her reach. However, the unsightly tailless condition of the vigorous steed was, to the last hour of the noble creature's life, an awful warning to the Carrick farmer not to stay too late in Ayr markets.

The last relation I shall give you, though equally true, is not so well identified as the two former, with regard to the scene ; but as the best authorities give it for Alloway, I shall relate it.

On a summer's evening, about the time that nature puts on her sables to mourn the expiry of the cheerful day, a shepherd boy, belonging to a farmer in the immediate neighbourhood of Alloway Kirk, had just folded his charge and was returning home. As he passed the kirk, in the adjoining field, he fell in with a crew of men and women, who were busy pulling stems of the plant ragwort. He observed that as each person pulled a ragwort, he or she got astride of it, and called out, 'Up, horsie', on which the ragwort flew off, like Pegasus, through the air, with its rider. The foolish boy likewise pulled his ragwort and cried with the rest, 'Up, horsie', and, strange to tell, away he flew with the company. The first stage at which the cavalcade stopped was a merchant's wine-cellar in Bordeaux,

where, without saying by your leave, they quaffed away at the best the cellar could afford, until the morning, foe to the imps and works of darkness, threatened to throw light on the matter, and frightened them from their carousals.

The poor shepherd lad, being equally a stranger to the scene and the liquor, heedlessly got himself drunk; and when the rest took horse he fell asleep, and was found so next day by some of the people belonging to the merchant. Somebody that understood Scotch, asking him what he was, he said he was such-a-one's herd in Alloway, and by some means or other getting home again, he lived long to tell the world the wondrous tale.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

1770–1850

To Sir George Beaumont

A brother's character

Grasmere, 20 *Feb.* 1805.

Having spoken of worldly affairs, let me again mention my beloved brother. It is now just five years since, after a separation of fourteen years (I may call it a separation, for we only saw him four or five times, and by glimpses), he came to visit his sister and me in this cottage, and passed eight blessed months with us. He was then waiting for the command of the ship to which he was appointed when he quitted us. As you will have seen, we had little to live upon, and he as little (Lord Lonsdale being then alive). But he encouraged me to persist, and to keep my eye steady on its object. He would work for me (that was his language), for me and his sister; and I was to endeavour to do something for the world. He went to sea, as commander, with this hope; his voyage was very unsuccessful, he having lost by it considerably. When he came home, we chanced to be in London, and saw him. 'Oh!' said he, 'I have thought of you, and nothing but you; if ever of myself, and my bad success, it was only on your account.' He went again to sea a second time, and also was unsuccessful; still with the same hopes on our account, though then not so

necessary, Lord Lowther having paid the money. Lastly came the lamentable voyage, which he entered upon, full of expectation, and love to his sister and myself, and my wifė, whom, indeed, he loved with all a brother's tenderness. This is the end of his part of the agreement—of his efforts for my welfare! God grant me life and strength to fulfil mine! I shall never forget him—never lose sight of him: there is a bond between us yet, the same as if he were living, nay, far more sacred, calling upon me to do my utmost, as he to the last did his utmost to live in honour and worthiness. Some of the newspapers carelessly asserted that he did not wish to survive his ship. This is false. He was heard by one of the surviving officers giving orders, with all possible calmness, a very little before the ship went down; and when he could remain at his post no longer, then, and not till then, he attempted to save himself. I knew this would be so, but it was satisfactory for me to have it confirmed by external evidence. Do not think our grief unreasonable. Of all human beings whom I ever knew, he was the man of the most rational desires, the most sedate habits, and the most perfect self-command. He was modest and gentle, and shy even to disease; but this was wearing off. In everything his judgements were sound and original; his taste in all the arts, music and poetry in particular (for these he, of course, had had the best opportunities of being familiar with), was exquisite; and his eye for the beauties of nature was as fine and delicate as ever poet or painter was gifted with, in some discriminations, owing to his education and way of life, far superior to any person's I ever knew. But, alas! what

avails it? It was the will of God that he should be taken away....

I trust in God that I shall not want fortitude; but my loss is great and irreparable....

To Walter Scott

Dryden

Patterdale, 7 *Nov.* 1805.

My dear Scott,

I was much pleased to hear of your engagement with Dryden: not that he is, as a poet, any great favourite of mine: I admire his talents and genius highly, but his is not a poetical genius. The only qualities I can find in Dryden that are *essentially* poetical, are a certain ardour and impetuosity of mind, with an excellent ear. It may seem strange that I do not add to this, great command of language: *that* he certainly has, and of such language too, as it is most desirable that a poet should possess, or rather that he should not be without. But it is not language that is, in the highest sense of the word, poetical, being neither of the imagination nor of the passions; I mean the amiable, the ennobling, or the intense passions. I do not mean to say that there is nothing of this in Dryden, but as little, I think, as is possible, considering how much he has written. You will easily understand my meaning, when I refer to his versification of *Palamon and Arcite*, as contrasted with the language of Chaucer. Dryden had neither a tender heart nor a lofty sense of moral dignity. Whenever his language is poetically impassioned, it is mostly upon

unpleasing subjects, such as the follies, vices, and crimes of classes of men or of individuals, That his cannot be the language of imagination, must have necessarily followed from this,—that there is not a single image from nature in the whole body of his works; and in his translation from Virgil, wherever Virgil can be fairly said to have had his *eye* upon his object, Dryden always spoils the passage.

But too much of this; I am glad that you are to be his editor. His political and satirical pieces may be greatly benefited by illustration, and even absolutely require it. A correct text is the first object of an editor, then such notes as explain difficult or obscure passages; and lastly, which is much less important, notes pointing out authors to whom the poet has been indebted, not in the fiddling way of phrase here and phrase there, (which is detestable as a general practice), but where he has had essential obligations either as to matter or manner.

If I can be of any use to you, do not fail to apply to me. One thing I may take the liberty to suggest, which is, when you come to the fables, might it not be advisable to print the whole of the Tales of Boccace in a smaller type in the original language? If this should look too much like swelling a book, I should certainly make such extracts as would show where Dryden has most strikingly improved upon, or fallen below, his original. I think his translations from Boccace are the best, at least the most poetical, of his poems. It is many years since I saw Boccace, but I remember that Sigismunda is not married by him to Guiscard (the names are different in

Boccace in both tales, I believe—certainly in Theodore, &c.). I think Dryden has much injured the story by the marriage, and degraded Sigismunda's character by it. He has also, to the best of my remembrance, degraded her still more, by making her love absolute sensuality and appetite; Dryden had no other notion of the passion. With all these defects, and they are very gross ones, it is a noble poem. Guiscard's answer, when first reproached by Tancred, is noble in Boccace—nothing but this: *Amor può molto più che ne voi ne io possiamo.* This, Dryden has spoiled. He says first very well, 'the faults of love by love are justified,' and then come four lines of miserable rant, quite *à la Maximin.*)

To Lady Beaumont

The destiny of his poems

Coleorton, 21 *May*, 1807.

My dear Lady Beaumont,

Though I am to see you so soon, I cannot but write a word or two, to thank you for the interest you take in my poems, as evinced by your solicitude about their immediate reception. I write partly to thank you for this, and to express the pleasure it has given me, and partly to remove any uneasiness from your mind which the disappointments you sometimes meet with, in this labour of love, may occasion. I see that you have many battles to fight for me—more than, in the ardour and confidence of your pure and elevated mind, you had ever thought of being summoned to; but be assured that this opposition is

nothing more than what I distinctly foresaw that you and my other friends would have to encounter. I say this, not to give myself credit for an eye of prophecy, but to allay any vexatious thoughts on my account which this opposition may have produced in you.

It is impossible that any expectations can be lower than mine concerning the immediate effect of this little work upon what is called the public. I do not here take into consideration the envy and malevolence, and all the bad passions which always stand in the way of a work of any merit from a living poet; but merely think of the pure, absolute, honest ignorance in which all worldlings of every rank and situation must be enveloped, with respect to the thoughts, feelings and images on which the life of my poems depends. The things which I have taken, whether from within or without, what have they to do with routs, dinners, morning calls, hurry from door to door, from street to street, on foot or in carriage; with Mr. Pitt or Mr. Fox, Mr. Paul or Sir Francis Burdett, the Westminster election or the borough of Honiton? In a word—for I cannot stop to make my way through the hurry of images that present themselves to me—what have they to do with the endless talking about things nobody cares anything for except as far as their own vanity is concerned, and this with persons they care nothing for but as their vanity or *selfishness* is concerned?—what have they to do (to say all at once) with a life without love? In such a life there can be no thought; for we have no thought (save thoughts of pain) but as far as we have love and admiration.

It is an awful truth, that there neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world—among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society. This is a truth, and an awful one, because to be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in my sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God.

Upon this I shall insist elsewhere; at present let me confine myself to my object; which is to make you, my dear friend, as easy-hearted as myself with respect to these poems. Trouble not yourself upon their present reception; of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny?—to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and therefore, to become more actively and securely virtuous; this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform, long after we (that is, all that is mortal of us) are mouldered in our graves. I am well aware how far it would seem to many I overrate my own exertions, when I speak in this way, in direct connexion with the volume I have just made public.

I am not, however, afraid of such censure, insignificant as probably the majority of those poems would appear to very respectable persons. I do not mean London wits and witlings, for these have too many foul passions about them to be respectable, even if they had more intellect than the benign laws of Providence will allow to

such a heartless existence as theirs is; but grave, kindly-natured, worthy persons, who would be pleased if they could. I hope that these volumes are not without some recommendations, even for readers of this class: but their imagination has slept; and the voice which is the voice of my poetry, without imagination, cannot be heard. . . .

My letter (as this second sheet, which I am obliged to take, admonishes me) is growing to an enormous length; and yet, saving that I have expressed my calm confidence that these poems will live, I have said nothing which has a particular application to the object of it, which was to remove all disquiet from your mind on account of the condemnation they may at present incur from that portion of my contemporaries who are called the public. I am sure, my dear Lady Beaumont, if you attach any importance to it, it can only be from an apprehension that it may affect me, upon which I have already set you at ease; or from a fear that this present blame is ominous of their future or final destiny. If this be the case, your tenderness for me betrays you. Be assured that the decision of these persons has nothing to do with the question; they are altogether incompetent judges. (These people, in the senseless hurry of their idle lives, do not *read* books, they merely snatch a glance at them, that they may talk about them.) And even if this were not so, never forget what, I believe, was observed to you by Coleridge, that every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great or original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished; he must teach the art by which he is to be seen; this, in a certain degree, even to all

persons, however wise and pure may be their lives, and however unvitiated their taste. But for those who dip into books in order to give an opinion of them, or talk about them to take up an opinion—for this multitude of unhappy and misguided, and misguiding beings, an entire regeneration must be produced; and if this be possible, it must be a work of time. To conclude, my ears are stone-dead to this idle buzz, and my flesh as insensible as iron to these petty stings; and after what I have said, I am sure yours will be the same. I doubt not that you will share with me an invincible confidence that my writings (and among them these little poems) will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, wherever found; and that they will in their degree be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier. Farewell. I will not apologize for this letter, though its length demands an apology....

To Sir George Beaumont

The language of poetry

[c. 1807.]

My dear Sir George,

I am quite delighted to hear of your picture for *Peter Bell*; I was much pleased with the sketch, and I have no doubt that the picture will surpass it as far as a picture ought to do. I long much to see it. I should approve of any engraver approved by you. But remember that no poem of mine will ever be popular; and I am afraid that the sale of *Peter* would not carry the

expense of the engraving, and that the poem, in the estimation of the public, would be a weight upon the print. I say not this in modest disparagement of the poem, but in sorrow for the sickly taste of the public in verse. The *people* would love the poem of *Peter Bell*, but the *public* (a very different being) will never love it. Thanks for dear Lady B.'s transcript from your friend's letter; it is written with candour, but I must say a word or two not in praise of it. 'Instances of what I mean,' says your friend, 'are to be found in a poem on a Daisy' (by the by, it is on *the* Daisy, a mighty difference!) 'and on *Daffodils reflected in the Water*'. Is this accurately transcribed by Lady Beaumont? If it be, what shall we think of criticism or judgement founded upon, and exemplified by, a poem which must have been so inattentively perused? My language is precise; and, therefore, it would be false modesty to charge myself with blame.

> Beneath the trees,
> Ten thousand dancing in the *breeze*.
> The *waves beside* them danced, but they
> Outdid the *sparkling waves* in glee.

Can expression be more distinct? And let me ask your friend how it is possible for flowers to be *reflected* in water when there are *waves*? They may, indeed, in *still* water; but the very object of my poem is the trouble or agitation, both of the flowers and the water. I must needs respect the understanding of every one honoured by your friendship; but sincerity compels me to say that my poems must be more nearly looked at, before they can give rise to any remarks of much value, even from the strongest minds. With respect to

this individual poem, Lady B. will recollect how Mrs. Fermor expressed herself upon it. A letter also was sent to me, addressed to a friend of mine, and by him communicated to me, in which this identical poem was singled out for fervent approbation. What then shall we say? Why, let the poet first consult his own heart, as I have done, and leave the rest to posterity—to, I hope, an improving posterity. The fact is, the English *public* are at this moment in the same state of mind with respect to my poems, if small things may be compared with great, as the French are in respect to Shakespeare, and not the French alone, but almost the whole Continent. In short, in your friend's letter, I am condemned for the very thing for which I ought to have been praised, viz., that I have not written down to the level of superficial observers and unthinking minds. Every great poet is a teacher: I wish either to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing. . . .

SIR WALTER SCOTT

1771-1832

To his mother

Marriage with Miss Carpenter

[1797.]

My dear Mother,

I should very ill deserve the care and affection with which you have ever regarded me, were I to neglect my duty so far as to omit consulting my father and you in the most important step which I can possibly take in life, and upon the success of which my future happiness must depend. It is with pleasure I think that I can avail myself of your advice and instructions in an affair of so great importance as that which I have at present on my hands. You will probably guess from this preamble, that I am engaged in a matrimonial plan, which is really the case. Though my acquaintance with the young lady has not been of long standing, this circumstance is in some degree counterbalanced by the intimacy in which we have lived, and by the opportunities which that intimacy has afforded me of remarking her conduct and sentiments on many different occasions, some of which were rather of a delicate nature, so that in fact I have seen more of her during the few weeks we have been together, than I could have done after a much longer acquaintance, shackled by the common forms of ordinary life. You will not expect from me a description of her person,—for which I refer you to my brother, as also for a fuller

account of all the circumstances attending the business than can be comprised in the compass of a letter. Without flying into raptures, for I must assure you that my judgement as well as my affections are consulted upon this occasion; without flying into raptures then, I may safely assure you, that her temper is sweet and cheerful, her understanding good, and what I know will give you pleasure, her principles of religion very serious. I have been very explicit with her upon the nature of my expectations, and she thinks she can accommodate herself to the situation which I should wish her to hold in society as my wife, which, you will easily comprehend, I mean should neither be extravagant nor degrading. Her fortune, though partly dependent upon her brother, who is high in office at Madras, is very considerable—at present £500 a-year. This, however, we must, in some degree, regard as precarious,—I mean to the full extent; and indeed when you know her you will not be surprised that I regard this circumstance chiefly because it removes those prudential considerations which would otherwise render our union impossible for the present. Betwixt her income and my own professional exertions, I have little doubt we will be enabled to hold the rank in society which my family and situation entitle me to fill.

My dear Mother, I cannot express to you the anxiety I have that you will not think me flighty nor inconsiderate in this business. Believe me, that experience, in one instance—you cannot fail to know to what I allude—is too recent to permit my being so hasty in my conclusions as the warmth of my temper might have otherwise prompted.

I am also most anxious that you should be prepared to show her kindness, which I know the goodness of your own heart will prompt, more especially when I tell you that she is an orphan, without relations, and almost without friends. Her guardian is, I should say *was*, for she is of age, Lord Downshire, to whom I must write for his consent, a piece of respect to which he is entitled for his care of her—and there the matter rests at present. I think I need not tell you that if I assume the new character which I threaten, I shall be happy to find that in that capacity, I may make myself more useful to my brothers, and especially to Anne, than I could in any other. On the other hand, I shall certainly expect that my friends will endeavour to show every attention in their power to a woman who forsakes for me, prospects much more splendid than what I can offer, and who comes into Scotland without a single friend but myself. I find I could write a great deal more upon this subject, but as it is late, and as I must write to my father, I shall restrain myself. I think (but you are the best judge) that in the circumstances in which I stand, you should write to her, Miss Carpenter, under cover to me at Carlisle.

Write to me very fully upon this important subject—send me your opinion, your advice, and above all, your blessing ; you will see the necessity of not delaying a minute in doing so, and in keeping this business *strictly private*, till you hear farther from me, since you are not ignorant that even at this advanced period, an objection on the part of Lord Downshire, or many other accidents, may intervene ; in which case, I should little wish my disappointment to be public.

To Miss Seward

The Lay of the Last Minstrel

Edinburgh, 21 *March*, 1805.

My dear Miss Seward,

I am truly happy that you found any amusement in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel.* It has great faults, of which no one can be more sensible than I am myself. Above all, it is deficient in that sort of continuity which a story ought to have, and which, were it to write again, I would endeavour to give it. But I began and wandered forward, like one in a pleasant country, getting to the top of one hill to see a prospect, and to the bottom of another to enjoy a shade, and what wonder if my course has been devious and desultory, and many of my excursions altogether unprofitable to the advance of my journey. The Dwarf Page is also an excrescence, and I plead guilty to all the censures concerning him. The truth is, he has a history, and it is this: The story of Gilpin Horner was told by an old gentleman to Lady Dalkeith, and she, much diverted with his actually believing so grotesque a tale, insisted that I should make it into a Border ballad. I don't know if you ever saw my lovely chieftainess—if you have, you must be aware that it is *impossible* for any one to refuse her request, as she has more of the angel in face and temper than any one alive; so that if she had asked me to write a ballad on a broomstick I must have attempted it. I began a few verses, to be called the Goblin Page; and they lay long by me, till the applause of some friends whose judgement I valued induced me to resume the poem; so on I wrote, knowing no more than the man in

the moon how I was to end. At length the story appeared so uncouth, that I was fain to put it into the mouth of my old minstrel—lest the nature of it should be misunderstood, and I should be suspected of setting up a new school of poetry, instead of a feeble attempt to imitate the old. In the process of romance the page, intended to be a principal person in the work, contrived (from the baseness of his natural propensities, I suppose) to slink downstairs into the kitchen, and now he must e'en abide there.

I mention these circumstances to you, and to any one whose applause I value, because I am unwilling you should suspect me of trifling with the public in *malice prepense.* As to the herd of critics, it is impossible for me to pay much attention to them; for, as they do not understand what I call poetry, we talk in a foreign language to each other. Indeed, many of these gentlemen appear to me to be a sort of tinkers, who, unable to *make* pots and pans, set up for *menders* of them, and, God knows, often make two holes in patching one. The sixth canto is altogether redundant; for the poem should certainly have closed with the union of the lovers, when the interest, if any, was at an end. But what could I do? I had my book and my page still on my hands, and must get rid of them at all events. Manage them as I would, their catastrophe must have been insufficient to occupy an entire canto; so I was fain to eke it out with the songs of the minstrels. I will now descend from the confessional, which I think I have occupied long enough for the patience of my fair confessor. I am happy you are disposed to give me absolution, notwithstanding all my sins.

We have a new poet come forth amongst us—James Graham, author of a poem called *The Sabbath*, which I admire very much. If I can find an opportunity I will send you a copy.

To Lady Louisa Stuart

An amiable blue-stocking

Edinburgh, 16 *June*, 1808.

My dear Lady Louisa,

Nothing will give us more pleasure than to have the honour of showing every attention in our power to Mr. and Mrs. Morritt, and I am particularly happy in a circumstance that at once promises me a great deal of pleasure in the acquaintance of your Ladyship's friends, and affords me the satisfaction of hearing from you again. Pray don't triumph over me too much in the case of Lydia. I stood a very respectable siege; but she caressed my wife, coaxed my children, and made, by dint of cake and pudding, some impression even upon the affections of my favourite dog: so, when all the outworks were carried, the mere fortress had no choice but to surrender on honourable terms. To the best of my thinking, notwithstanding the cerulean hue of her stockings, and a most plentiful stock of eccentric affectation, she is really at bottom a good-natured woman, with much liveliness and some talent. She is now set out to the Highlands, where she is likely to encounter many adventures. Mrs. Scott and I went as far as Loch Catrine with her, from which jaunt I have just returned. We had most heavenly weather, which was peculiarly favourable to my

fair companions' zeal for sketching every object that fell in their way, from a castle to a pigeon-house. Did your Ladyship ever travel with a *drawing* companion ? Mine drew like cart-horses, as well in laborious zeal as in effect ; for, after all, I could not help hinting that the cataracts delineated bore a singular resemblance to haycocks, and the rocks much correspondence to large old-fashioned cabinets with their folding-doors open. So much for Lydia, whom I left on her journey through the Highlands, but by what route she had not resolved. I gave her three plans, and think it likely she will adopt none of them : moreover, when the executive government of postilions, landlords, and Highland boatmen devolves upon her English servant instead of me, I am afraid the distresses of the errant damsels will fall a little beneath the dignity of romances. All this nonsense is *entre nous*, for Miss White has been actively zealous in getting me some Irish correspondence about Swift, and otherwise very obliging.

It is not with my inclination that I fag for the booksellers ; but what can I do ? My poverty and not my will consents. The income of my office is only reversionary, and my private fortune much limited. My poetical success fairly destroyed my prospects of professional success, and obliged me to retire from the bar ; for though I had a competent share of information and industry, who would trust their cause to the author of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* ? Now, although I do allow that an author should take care of his literary character, yet I think the least thing that his literary character can do in return is to take some care of the author, who is unfortunately, like Jeremy in

Love for Love, furnished with a set of tastes and appetites which would do honour to the income of a Duke if he had it. Besides, I go to work with Swift *con amore*; for, like Dryden, he is an early favourite of mine. The *Marmion* is nearly out, and I have made one or two alterations on the third edition, with which the press is now groaning. So soon as it is, it will make the number of copies published within the space of six months amount to eight thousand,—an immense number, surely, and enough to comfort the author's wounded feelings, had the claws of the reviewers been able to reach him through the *steel jack* of true Border indifference.

To Robert Southey

Congratulations

Edinburgh, 13 *Nov.* 1813.

I do not delay, my dear Southey, to say my *gratulor*. Long may you live, as Paddy says, to rule over us, and to redeem the crown of Spenser and of Dryden to its pristine dignity. I am only discontented with the extent of your royal revenue, which I thought had been £400, or £300 at the very least. Is there no getting rid of that iniquitous modus, and requiring the *butt* in kind? I would have you think of it: I know no man so well entitled to Xeres sack as yourself, though many bards would make a better figure at drinking it. I should think that in due time a memorial might get some relief in this part of the appointment—it should be at least £100 wet and £100 dry. When you have carried your point of discarding

the ode, and my point of getting the sack, you will be exactly in the situation of Davy in the farce, who stipulates for more wages, less work, and the key of the ale-cellar. I was greatly delighted with the circumstances of your investiture. It reminded me of the porters at Calais with Dr. Smollett's baggage, six of them seizing upon one small portmanteau, and bearing it in triumph to his lodgings. You see what it is to laugh at the superstitions of a gentleman-usher, as I think you do somewhere. 'The whirligig of Time brings about his revenges.'

Adieu, my dear Southey ; my best wishes attend all that you do, and my best congratulations every good that attends you—yea even this. the very least of Providence's mercies, as a poor clergyman said when pronouncing grace over a herring. I should like to know how the prince received you ; his address is said to be excellent, and his knowledge of literature far from despicable. What a change of fortune even since the short time when we met ! The great work of retribution is now rolling onward to consummation, yet am I not fully satisfied—*pereat iste*—there will be no permanent peace in Europe till Buonaparte sleeps with the tyrants of old.

To J. B. S. Morritt

A small anonymous sort of a novel

Edinburgh, 9 *July*, 1814.

My dear Morritt,

I owe you many apologies for not sooner answering your very entertaining letter upon your Parisian journey. I heartily wish I had been of

your party, for you have seen what I trust will not be seen again in a hurry; since, to enjoy the delight of a restoration, there is a necessity for a previous *bouleversement* of everything that is valuable in morals and policy which seems to have been the case in France since 1790. The Duke of Buccleugh told me yesterday of a very good reply of Louis to some of his attendants, who proposed shutting the doors of his apartments to keep out the throng of people. 'Open the door,' he said, 'to John Bull; he has suffered a great deal in keeping the door open for me.'

Now, to go from one important subject to another, I must account for my own laziness, which I do by referring you to a small anonymous sort of a novel, in three volumes, *Waverley*, which you will receive by the mail of this day. It was a very old attempt of mine to embody some traits of those characters and manners peculiar to Scotland, the last remnants of which vanished during my own youth, so that few or no traces now remain. I had written great part of the first volume, and sketched other passages, when I mislaid the MS., and only found it by the merest accident as I was rummaging the drawers of an old cabinet; and I took the fancy of finishing it, which I did so fast, that the last two volumes were written in three weeks. I had a great deal of fun in the accomplishment of this task, though I do not expect that it will be popular in the south, as much of the humour, if there be any, is local, and some of it even professional. You, however, who are an adopted Scotchman, will find some amusement in it. It has made a very strong impression here, and the good people of Edinburgh

are busied in tracing the author, and in finding out originals for the portraits it contains. In the first case, they will probably find it difficult to convict the guilty author, although he is far from escaping suspicion. Jeffrey has offered to make oath that it is mine, and another great critic has tendered his affidavit *ex contrario*; so that these authorities have divided the Gude Town. However, the thing has succeeded very well, and is thought highly of. I don't know if it has got to London yet. I intend to maintain my *incognito*. Let me know your opinion about it. . . .

24 *July*.

. . . I had just proceeded thus far when your kind favour of the 21st reached Abbotsford. I am heartily glad you continued to like *Waverley* to the end. The hero is a sneaking piece of imbecility; and if he had married Flora, she would have set him up upon the chimney-piece, as Count Borowlaski's wife used to do with him. I am a bad hand at depicting a hero properly so called, and have an unfortunate propensity for the dubious characters of borderers, buccaneers, Highland robbers, and all others of a Robin-Hood description. I do not know why it should be, as I am myself, like Hamlet, indifferent honest; but I suppose the blood of the old cattle-drivers of Teviotdale continues to stir in my veins.

To the same

Acceptance of a baronetcy

Edinburgh, 7 *Dec.* 1818.

My dear Morritt,

... There is another thing I have to whisper in your faithful ear. Our fat friend being desirous to honour Literature in my unworthy person, has intimated to me, by his organ the Doctor, that, with consent ample and unanimous of all the potential voices of all his ministers, each more happy than another of course on so joyful an occasion, he proposes to dub me Baronet. It would be easy saying a parcel of fine things about my contempt of rank, and so forth; but although I would not have gone a step out of my way to have asked, or bought, or begged, or borrowed a distinction, which to me personally will rather be inconvenient than otherwise, yet, coming as it does directly from the source of feudal honours, and as an honour, I am really gratified with it;—especially as it is intimated, that it is his Royal Highness's pleasure to heat the oven for me expressly, without waiting till he has some new *batch* of Baronets ready in dough. In plain English, I am to be gazetted *per se*. My poor friend Carpenter's bequest to my family has taken away a certain degree of *impecuniosity*, a necessity of saving cheese-parings and candle-ends, which always looks inconsistent with any little pretension to rank. But as things now stand, Advance banners in the name of God and St. Andrew. Remember, I anticipate the jest, 'I like not such grinning honours, as Sir Walter hath.' After all, if one

must speak for themselves, I have my quarters and emblazonments, free of all stain but Border theft and High Treason, which I hope are gentlemanlike crimes; and I hope Sir Walter Scott will not sound worse than Sir Humphry Davy, though my merits are as much under his, in point of utility, as can well be imagined. But a name is something, and mine is the better of the two. Set down this flourish to the account of national and provincial pride, for you must know we have more Messieurs de Sotenville in our Border counties than anywhere else in the Lowlands—I cannot say for the Highlands.

To Lord Montagu

Prince Leopold's visit

Abbotsford, 3 *Oct.* 1819.

My dear Lord,

I am honoured with your Buxton letter. . . . *Anent* Prince Leopold, I only heard of his approach at eight o'clock in the morning, and he was to be at Selkirk by eleven. The magistrates sent to ask me to help them to receive him. It occurred to me he might be coming to Melrose to see the Abbey, in which case I could not avoid asking him to Abbotsford, as he must pass my very door. I mentioned this to Mrs. Scott, who was lying quietly in bed, and I wish you had heard the scream she gave on the occasion. 'What have we to offer him?'—'Wine and cake,' said I, thinking to make all things easy; but she ejaculated, in a tone of utter despair, 'Cake!! where am I to get cake?' However, being partly consoled with

the recollection that his visit was a very improbable incident, and curiosity, as usual, proving too strong for alarm, she set out with me in order not to miss a peep of the great man. James Skene and his lady were with us, and we gave our carriages such additional dignity as a pair of leaders could add, and went to meet him in full puff. The Prince very civilly told me, that, though he could not see Melrose on this occasion, he wished to come to Abbotsford for an hour. New despair on the part of Mrs. Scott, who began to institute a domiciliary search for cold meat through the whole city of Selkirk, which produced *one shoulder of cold lamb.* In the meanwhile, his Royal Highness received the civic honours of the BIRSE [1] very graciously. I had hinted to Bailie Lang, that it ought only to be licked *symbolically* on the present occasion; so he flourished it three times before his mouth, but without touching it with his lips, and the Prince followed his example as directed. Lang made an excellent speech, sensible, and feeling, and well delivered. The Prince seemed much surprised at this great propriety of expression and behaviour in a magistrate, whose people seemed such a rabble, and whose whole band of music consisted in a drum and fife. He noticed to Bailie Anderson, that Selkirk seemed very populous in proportion to its extent. 'On an occasion like this it seems so,' answered the Bailie, neatly enough I thought. I question if any magistrates in the kingdom, lord mayors and aldermen not excepted, could have behaved with more decent and quiet good-breeding. Prince Leopold repeatedly alluded to

[1] Bundle of hog's bristles, symbol of the soutars.

this during the time he was at Abbotsford. I do not know how Mrs. Scott ultimately managed; but with broiled salmon, and black-cock, and partridges, she gave him a very decent lunch; and I chanced to have some very fine old hock, which was mighty germain to the matter.

The Prince seems melancholy, whether naturally or from habit, I do not pretend to say; but I do not remember thinking him so at Paris, where I saw him frequently, then a much poorer man than myself; yet he showed some humour, for alluding to the crowds that followed him everywhere, he mentioned some place where he had gone out to shoot, but was afraid to proceed for fear of 'bagging a boy'. He said he really thought of getting some shooting-place in Scotland, and promised me a longer visit on his return. If I had had a day's notice to have *warned the waters*, we could have met him with a very respectable number of the gentry; but there was no time for this, and probably he liked it better as it was. There was only young Clifton who could have come, and he was shy and cubbish, and would not, though requested by the Selkirk people. He was perhaps ashamed to march through Coventry with them. It hung often and sadly on my mind that *he* was wanting who could and would have received him like a Prince indeed; and yet the meeting betwixt them, had they been fated to meet, would have been a very sad one. I think I have now given your lordship a very full, true, and particular account of our royal visit, unmatched even by that of King Charles at the Castle of Tillietudlem. That we did not speak of it for more than a week after it happened, and that

that emphatic monosyllable, *The Prince*, is not heard amongst us more than ten times a-day, is, on the whole, to the credit of my family's understanding. The piper is the only one whose brain he seems to have endangered; for, as the Prince said he preferred him to any he had heard in the Highlands—(which, by the way, shows his Royal Highness knows nothing of the matter),—the fellow seems to have become incapable of his ordinary occupation as a forester, and has cut stick and stem without remorse to the tune of *Phail Phranse*, i.e. the Prince's welcome.

To Daniel Terry

Progress at Abbotsford

Abbotsford, 10 *Nov.* 1822.

My dear Terry,

I got all the plans safe, and they are delightful. The library ceiling will be superb, and we have plenty of ornaments for it without repeating one of those in the eating-room. The plan of shelves is also excellent, and will, I think, for a long time suffice my collection. The brasses for the shelves, I like—but not the price: the notched ones, after all, do very well. I have had three grand hawls since I last wrote to you. The pulpit, repentance-stool, King's seat, and God knows how much of carved wainscot, from the kirk of Dunfermline, enough to coat the hall to the height of seven feet: —supposing it boarded above, for hanging guns, old portraits, intermixed with armour, &c.—it will be a superb entrance-gallery: this is hawl the first. Hawl second is twenty-four pieces of the

most splendid Chinese paper, twelve feet high by four wide, a present from my cousin Hugh Scott, enough to finish the drawing-room and two bed-rooms. Hawl third is a quantity of what is called Jamaica cedar-wood, enough for fitting up both the drawing-room and the library, including the presses, shelves, &c.: the wood is finely pencilled and most beautiful, something like the colour of gingerbread; it costs very little more than oak, works much easier, and is never touched by vermin of any kind. I sent Mr. Atkinson a specimen, but it was from the plain end of the plank; the interior is finely waved and variegated. Your kind and unremitting exertions in our favour will soon plenish the drawing-room. Thus we at present stand. We have a fine old English cabinet, with china, &c.—and two superb elbow-chairs, the gift of Constable, carved most magnificently, with groups of children, fruit, and flowers, in the Italian taste: they came from Rome, and are much admired. It seems to me that the mirror you mention, being framed in carved box, would answer admirably well with the chairs, which are of the same material. The mirror should, I presume, be placed over the drawing-room chimney-piece; and opposite to it I mean to put an antique table of mosaic marbles, to support Chantrey's bust. A good sofa would be desirable, and so would the tapestry screen, if really fresh and beautiful; but as much of our furniture will be a little antiquated, one would not run too much into that taste in so small an apartment. For the library I have the old oak chairs now in the little armoury, eight in number, and we might add one or two pair of the ebony chairs you mention. I should think this

enough, for many seats in such a room must impede access to the books ; and I don't mean the library to be on ordinary occasions a public room. Perhaps the tapestry-screen would suit better here than in the drawing-room. I have one library table here, and shall have another made for atlases and prints. For the hall I have four chairs of black oak. In other matters we can make it out well enough. In fact, it is my object rather to keep under my new accommodations at first, both to avoid immediate outlay, and that I may leave room for pretty things which may occur hereafter. I would to Heaven I could take a cruise with you through the brokers, which would be the pleasantest affair possible, only I am afraid I should make a losing voyage of it. Mr. Atkinson has missed a little my idea of the oratory, fitting it up entirely as a bookcase, whereas I should like to have had recesses for curiosities—for the Bruce's skull—for a crucifix, &c., &c.—in short, a little cabinet instead of a book-closet. Four sides of books would be perfectly sufficient ; the other four, so far as not occupied by door or window, should be arranged tastefully for antiquities, &c., like the inside of an antique cabinet, with drawers, and shottles, and funny little arches. The oak screen dropped as from the clouds : it is most acceptable ; I might have guessed there was only one kind friend so ready to supply hay to my hobby-horse. You have my views in these matters and your own taste ; and I will send the *needful* when you apprise me of the amount total. Where things are not quite satisfactory, it is better to wait a while on every account, for the amusement is over when one has room for nothing more. The house

is completely roofed, &c., and looks worthy of Mrs. Terry's painting. I never saw anything handsomer than the grouping of towers, chimneys, &c. upon the roof, when seen at a proper distance.

Once more, let me wish you joy of your professional success. I can judge, by a thousand minute items, of the advance you make with the public, just as I can of the gradual progress of my trees, because I am interested in both events. You may say, like Burke, you were not 'coaxed and dandled into eminence' but have fought your way gallantly, shown your passport at every barrier, and been always a stép in advance, without a single retrograde movement. Every one wishes to advance rapidly, but when the desired position is gained, it is far more easily maintained by him whose ascent has been gradual, and whose favour is founded not on the unreasonable expectations entertained from one or two seasons, but from an habitual experience of the power of pleasing during several years. You say not a word of poor Wattles. I hope little Miss has not put his nose out of joint entirely.

I have not been very well—a whoreson thickness of blood, and a depression of spirits arising from the loss of friends (to whom I am now to add poor Wedderburne), have annoyed me much; and *Peveril* will, I fear, smell of the apoplexy. I propose a good rally, however, and hope it will be a powerful effect. My idea is, *entre nous*, a Scotch archer in the French King's guard, *tempore* Louis XI, the most picturesque of all times.

To J. B. S. Morritt

A brave face to the world

Edinburgh, 6 *Feb.* 1826.

My dear Morritt,

It is very true I have been, and am in danger, of a pecuniary loss, and probably a very large one, which in the uncertainty I look at as to the full extent, being the manly way of calculating such matters, since one may be better, but can hardly be worse. I can't say I feel overjoyed at losing a large sum of hard-earned money in a most unexpected manner, for all men considered Constable's people secure as the Bank; yet, as I have obtained an arrangement of payment convenient for every body concerned, and easy for myself, I cannot say that I care much about the matter. Some economical restrictions I will make; and it happened oddly that they were such as Lady Scott and myself had almost determined upon without this compulsion. Abbotsford will henceforth be our only establishment; and during the time I must be in town, I will take my bed at the Albyn Club. We shall also break off the rather excessive hospitality to which we were exposed, and no longer stand host and hostess to all that do pilgrimage to Melrose. Then I give up an expensive farm, which I always hated, and turn all my odds and ends into cash. I do not reckon much on my literary exertions—I mean in proportion to former success—because popular taste may fluctuate. But with a moderate degree of the favour which I have always had, my time my own, and my mind unplagued about other things, I may boldly promise myself soon to get the better of this blow.

In these circumstances, I should be unjust and ungrateful to ask or accept the pity of my friends. I for one, do not see there is much occasion for making moan about it. My womankind will be the greater sufferers,—yet even they look cheerily forward; and, for myself, the blowing off my hat in a stormy day has given me more uneasiness.

I envy your Brighton party, and your fine weather. When I was at Abbotsford the mercury was down at six or seven in the morning more than once. I am hammering away at a bit of a story from the old affair of the *diablerie* at Woodstock in the Long Parliament times. I don't like it much. I am obliged to hamper my fanatics greatly too much to make them effective; but I make the sacrifice on principle; so, perhaps, I shall deserve good success in other parts of the work. You will be surprised when I tell you that I have written a volume in exactly fifteen days. To be sure, I permitted no interruptions. But then I took exercise, and for ten days of the fifteen attended the Court of Session from two to four hours every day. This is nothing, however, to writing *Ivanhoe* when I had the actual cramp in my stomach; but I have no idea of these things preventing a man from doing what he has a mind. My love to all the party at Brighton—fireside party I had almost said, but you scorn my words—seaside party then be it. Lady Scott and Anne join in kindest love. I must close my letter, for one of the consequences of our misfortunes is, that we dine every day at half-past four o'clock; which premature hour arises, I suppose, from sorrow being hungry as well as thirsty. One most laughable part of our tragic comedy was, that every friend in the world came

formally, just as they do here when a relation dies, thinking that the eclipse of *les beaux yeux de ma cassette* was perhaps a loss as deserving of consolation.

TO MARIA EDGEWORTH

Time's revenges

Edinburgh, 23 *June*, 1830.

MY DEAR MISS EDGEWORTH,

Nothing would be so valuable to me as the mark of kindness which you offer, and yet my kennel is so much changed since I had the pleasure of seeing you, that I must not accept of what I wished so sincerely to possess. I am the happy owner of two of the noble breed, each of gigantic size, and the gift of that sort of Highlander whom we call a High Chief, so I would hardly be justified in parting with them even to make room for your kind present, and I should have great doubts whether the mountaineers would receive the Irish stranger with due hospitality. One of them I had from poor Glengarry, who, with all the wild and fierce points of his character, had a kind, honest, and warm heart. The other from a young friend, whom Highlanders call MacVourigh, and Lowlanders MacPherson of Cluny. He is a fine spirited boy, fond of his people and kind to them, and the best dancer of a Highland reel now living. I fear I must not add a third to Nimrod and Bran, having little use for them except being pleasant companions. As to labouring in their vocation, we have only one wolf which I know of, kept in a friend's menagerie near me, and no wild deer.

Walter has some roebucks indeed, but Lochore is far off, and I begin to feel myself distressed at running down these innocent and beautiful creatures, perhaps because I cannot gallop so fast after them as to drown sense of the pain we are inflicting. And yet I suspect I am like the sick fox; and if my strength and twenty years could come back, I would become again a copy of my namesake, remembered by the sobriquet of Walter *ill tae hauld* (to hold, that is). 'But age has clawed me in its clutch,' and there is no remedy for increasing disability except dying, which is an awkward score.

There is some chance of my retiring from my official situation upon the changes in the Court of Session. They cannot reduce my office, though they do not wish to fill it up with a new occupant. I shall be therefore *de trop*; and in these days of economy they will be better pleased to let me retire on three parts of my salary than to keep me a Clerk of Session on the whole; and small grief at our parting, as the old horse said to the broken cart. And yet, though I thought such a proposal when first made was like a Pisgah peep at Paradise, I cannot help being a little afraid of changing the habits of a long life all of a sudden and for ever. You ladies have always your work-basket and stocking-knitting to wreak an hour of tediousness upon. The routine of business serves, I suspect, for the same purpose to us male wretches; it is seldom a burden to the mind, but a something which must be done, and is done almost mechanically; and though dull judges and duller clerks, the routine of law proceedings, and law forms, are very unlike the plumed troops and the tug of war, yet the result is the same. The occupation's gone.

The morning, that the day's news must all be gathered from other sources—that the jokes which the principal Clerks of Session have laughed at weekly for a century, and which would not move a muscle of any other person's face, must be laid up to perish like those of Sancho in the Sierra Morena —I don't above half like forgetting all these moderate habits, and yet

Ah, freedom is a noble thing!

as says the old Scottish poet. So I will cease my regrets, or lay them by to be taken up and used as arguments of comfort, in case I do not slip my cable after all, which is highly possible. Lockhart and Sophia have taken up their old residence at Chiefswood. They are very fond of the place; and I am glad also my grandchildren will be bred near the heather, for certain qualities which I think are best taught there.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

1772–1834

To Charles Lamb

A sympathetic reply[1]

28 *Sept.* 1796.

YOUR letter, my friend, struck me with a mighty horror. It rushed upon me and stupefied my feelings. You bid me write you a religious letter; I am not a man who would attempt to insult the greatness of your anguish by any other consolation. Heaven knows that in the easiest fortunes there is much dissatisfaction and weariness of spirit: much that calls for the exercise of patience and resignation; but in storms, like these, that shake the dwelling and make the heart tremble, there is no middle way between despair and the yielding up of the whole spirit unto the guidance of faith. And surely it is a matter of joy, that your faith in Jesus has been preserved; the Comforter that should relieve you is not far from you. But as you are a Christian, in the name of that Saviour, who was filled with bitterness and made drunken with wormwood, I conjure you to have recourse in frequent prayer to 'his God and your God'; the God of mercies, and father of all comfort. Your poor father is, I hope, almost senseless of the calamity; the unconscious instrument of Divine Providence knows it not, and your mother is in heaven. It is sweet to be roused from a frightful dream by the song of birds, and the gladsome rays of the morning. Ah, how infinitely more sweet

[1] See Letter, p. 355.

to be awakened from the blackness and amazement of a sudden horror by the glories of God manifest and the hallelujahs of angels.

As to what regards yourself, I approve altogether of your abandoning what you justly call vanities. I look upon you as a man called by sorrow and anguish and a strange desolation of hopes into quietness, and a soul set apart and made peculiar to God. We cannot arrive at any portion of heavenly bliss without in some measure imitating Christ; and they arrive at the largest inheritance who imitate the most difficult parts of His character, and, bowed down and crushed under foot, cry in fullness of faith, 'Father, Thy will be done.'

I wish above measure to have you for a little while here—no visitants shall blow on the nakedness of your feelings—you shall be quiet, and your spirit may be healed. I see no possible objection, unless your father's helplessness prevent you, and unless you are necessary to him. If this be not the case, I charge you write me that you will come.

I charge you, my dearest friend, not to dare to encourage gloom or despair—you are a temporary sharer in human miseries, that you may be an eternal partaker of the Divine nature. I charge you, if by any means it be possible, come to me.

To Joseph Cottle

Literary adventurers

[1798.]

My dear Cottle,

Neither Wordsworth nor myself could have been otherwise than uncomfortable, if any but yourself had received from us the first offer of our

tragedies, and of the volume of Wordsworth's poems. At the same time, we did not expect that you could with prudence and propriety, advance such a sum as we should want at the time we specified. In short, we both regard the publication of our tragedies as an evil. It is not impossible but that in happier times they may be brought on the stage: and to throw away this chance for a mere trifle, would be to make the present moment act fraudulently and usuriously towards the future time.

My tragedy employed and strained all my thoughts and faculties for six or seven months; Wordsworth consumed far more time, and far more thought, and far more genius. We consider the publication of them an evil on any terms; but our thoughts were bent on a plan for the accomplishment of which a certain sum of money was necessary, (the whole) at that particular time, and in order to do this we resolved, although reluctantly, to part with our tragedies: that is, if we could obtain thirty guineas for each, and at less than thirty guineas Wordsworth will not part with the copyright of his volume of poems. We shall offer the tragedies to no one, for we have determined to procure the money some other way. If you choose the volume of poems, at the price mentioned, to be paid at the time specified, i. e. thirty guineas, to be paid sometime in the last fortnight of July, you may have them; but remember, my dear fellow! I write to you now merely as a bookseller, and entreat you, in your answer, to consider yourself only; as to us, although money is necessary to our plan [that of visiting Germany], yet the plan is not necessary to our happiness; and if it were, W. would sell his

poems for that sum to some one else, or we could procure the money without selling the poems. So I entreat you, again and again, in your answer, which must be immediate, consider yourself only.

Wordsworth has been caballed against *so long and so loudly*, that he has found it impossible to prevail on the tenant of the Allfoxden estate to let him the house, after their first agreement is expired, so he must quit it at midsummer; whether we shall be able to procure him a house and furniture near Stowey, we know not, and yet we must: for the hills, and the woods, and the streams, and the sea, and the shores would break forth into reproaches against us, if we did not strain every nerve to keep their poet among them. Without joking, and in serious sadness, Poole and I cannot endure to think of losing him.

At all events, come down, Cottle, as soon as you can, but before midsummer, and we will procure a horse easy as thy own soul, and we will go on a roam to Lynton and Lynmouth, which, if thou comest in May, will be in all their pride of woods and waterfalls, not to speak of its august cliffs, and the green ocean, and the vast valley of stones, all which live disdainful of the seasons, or accept new honours only from the winter's snow. At all events come down, and cease not to believe me much and affectionately your friend.

To Josiah Wade

A public example

Bristol, 26 *June*, 1814.

Dear Sir,

For I am unworthy to call any good man friend—much less you, whose hospitality and love I have abused; accept, however, my entreaties for your forgiveness, and for your prayers.

Conceive a poor miserable wretch, who for many years has been attempting to beat off pain, by a constant recurrence to the vice that reproduces it. Conceive a spirit in hell, employed in tracing out for others the road to that heaven, from which his crimes exclude him! In short, conceive whatever is most wretched, helpless, and hopeless, and you will form as tolerable a notion of my state, as it is possible for a good man to have.

I used to think the text in St. James that 'he who offendeth in one point, offends in all,' very harsh; but I now feel the awful, the tremendous truth of it. In the one crime of OPIUM, what crime have I not made myself guilty of! Ingratitude to my Maker! and to my benefactors—injustice! *and unnatural cruelty to my poor children!* —self-contempt for my repeated promise-breach, nay, too often, actual falsehood!

After my death, I earnestly entreat that a full and unqualified narration of my wretchedness, and of its guilty cause, may be made public, that, at least, some little good may be effected by the direful example!

May God Almighty bless you, and have mercy on your still affectionate, and, in his heart, grateful

S. T. C.

To Thomas Allsop

Himself and his detractors

2 *Dec.* 1818.

My dear Sir,

I cannot express how kind I felt your letter. Would to Heaven I had had many with feelings like yours, 'accustomed to express themselves warmly and (as far as the word is applicable to you), even enthusiastically'. But alas! during the prime manhood of my intellect I had nothing but cold water thrown on my efforts. I speak not now of my systematic and most unprovoked maligners. On *them* I have retorted only by pity and by prayer. These may have, and doubtless have, joined with the frivolity of 'the reading public' in checking and almost in preventing the sale of my works; and so far have done injury to my *purse*. *Me* they have not injured. But I have loved with enthusiastic self-oblivion those who have been so well pleased that I should, year after year, flow with a hundred nameless rills into *their* main stream, that they could find nothing but cold praise and effective discouragement of every attempt of mine to roll onward in a distinct current of my own; who *admitted* that the *Ancient Mariner*, the *Christabel*, the *Remorse*, and some pages of the *Friend* were not without merit, but were abundantly anxious to acquit their judgements of any blindness to the very numerous defects. Yet they *knew* that to *praise*, as mere praise, I was characteristically, almost constitutionally, indifferent. In sympathy alone I found at once nourishment and stimulus; and for sympathy *alone* did my heart crave. They knew, too, how long and faith-

fully I have acted on the maxim, never to admit the *faults* of a work of genius to those who denied or were incapable of feeling and understanding the *beauties*; not from wilful partiality, but as well knowing that in *saying* truth I should, to such critics, convey falsehood. If, in one instance, in my literary life I have appeared to deviate from this rule, first, it was not till the fame of the writer (which I had been for fourteen years successfully toiling like a second Ali to build up) had been established; and secondly and chiefly, with the purpose and, I may safely add, with the *effect* of rescuing the necessary task from Malignant Defamers, and in order to set forth the excellences and the trifling proportion which the defects bore to the excellences. But this, my dear sir, is a mistake to which affectionate natures are too liable, though I do not remember to have ever seen it noticed—the mistaking those who are desirous and well pleased to be loved *by* you, for those who love you. Add, as a more general cause, the fact that I neither am nor ever have been of any party. What wonder, then, if I am left to decide which has been my worst enemy, the broad, pre-determined abuse of the *Edinburgh Review*, &c., or the cold and brief compliments, with the warm *regrets*, of the *Quarterly*? After all, however, I have now but one sorrow relative to the ill success of my literary toils (and toils they have been, *though not undelightful toils*), and this arises wholly from the almost insurmountable difficulties which the anxieties of to-day oppose to my completion of the great work, the form and materials of which it has been the employment of the best and most genial hours of the last twenty years to mature and collect.

If I could but have a tolerably numerous audience to my first, or first and second Lectures on the *History of Philosophy*, I should entertain a strong hope of success, because I know that these lectures will be found by far the most interesting and *entertaining* of any that I have yet delivered, independent of the more permanent interest of rememberable instruction. Few and unimportant would the errors of men be, if they did but know, first, *what they themselves meant*; and, secondly, what the *words* mean by which they attempt to convey their meaning, and I can conceive no subject so well fitted to exemplify the mode and the importance of these two points as the History of Philosophy, treated as in the scheme of these lectures.

To the same

The Great Work described

Jan. 1821.

. . . I HAVE already the *written* materials and contents, requiring only to be put together from the loose papers and commonplace or memorandum books, and needing no other change, whether of omission, addition, or correction, than the mere act of arranging, and the opportunity of seeing the whole collectively bring with them of course (1) Characteristics of Shakespeare's dramatic works, with a critical review of each play; together with a relative and comparative critique on the kind and degree of the merits and demerits of the dramatic works of Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger. The History of the English Drama; the accidental advantages it afforded to Shakespeare, without in the least

detracting from the perfect originality or proper creation of the Shakespearian Drama; the contradistinction of the latter from the Greek Drama, and its still remaining *uniqueness*, with the causes of this, from the combined influences of Shakespeare himself, as man, poet, philosopher, and finally, by conjunction of all these, dramatic poet; and of the age, events, manners, and state of the English language. This work, with every art of compression, amounts to three volumes of about five hundred pages each. (2) Philosophical Analysis of the Genius and Works of Dante, Spenser, Milton, Cervantes, and Calderon, with similar, but more compressed criticisms on Chaucer, Ariosto, Donne, Rabelais, and others, during the predominance of the Romantic Poetry. In one large volume. These two works will, I flatter myself, form a complete code of the principles of judgement and feeling applied to works of Taste; and not of Poetry only, but of Poesy in all its forms, Painting, Statuary, Music, &c., &c. (3) The History of Philosophy considered as a Tendency of the Human Mind to exhibit the Powers of the Human Reason, to discover by its own Strength the Origin and Laws of Man and the World, from Pythagoras to Locke and Condillac. Two volumes. (4) Letters on the Old and New Testament, and on the Doctrine and Principles held in common by the Fathers and Founders of the Reformation, addressed to a candidate for Holy Orders, including advice on the Plan and Subjects of Preaching, proper to a Minister of the Established Church.

To the completion of these four works, I have literally nothing more to do than to *transcribe*; but, as I before hinted, from so many scraps and

sibylline leaves, including margins of books and blank pages, that, unfortunately, I must be my own scribe, and not done by myself, they will be all but lost; or perhaps (as has been too often the case already) furnish feathers for the caps of others; some for this purpose, and some to plume the arrows of detraction, to be let fly against the luckless bird from whom they had been plucked or moulted.

In addition to these—of my GREAT WORK, to the preparation of which more than twenty years of my life have been devoted, and on which my hopes of extensive and permanent utility, of fame, in the noblest sense of the word, mainly rest—that, by which I might,

> As now by thee, by all the good be known,
> When this weak frame lies moulder'd in the grave,
> Which self-surviving I might call my own,
> Which folly cannot mar, nor hate deprave—
> The incense of those powers, which, risen in flame,
> Might make me dear to Him from whom they came.

Of this work, to which all my other writings (unless I except my Poems, and these I can exclude in part only) are introductory and preparative; and the result of which (if the premises be, as I, with the most tranquil assurance, am convinced they are—insubvertible, the deductions legitimate, and the conclusions commensurate, and only commensurate, with both) must finally be a revolution of all that has been called *philosophy* or metaphysics in England and France, since the era of the commencing predominance of the mechanical system at the restoration of our second Charles, and with this the present fashionable views, not only of religion, morals, and politics

but even of the modern physics and physiology. You will not blame the earnestness of my expressions, nor the high importance which I attach to this work: for how, with less noble objects, and less faith in their attainment, could I stand acquitted of folly, and abuse of time, talents, and learning in a labour of three-fourths of my intellectual life? Of this work, something more than a volume has been dictated by me, so as to exist fit for the press, to my friend and enlightened pupil, Mr. Green; and more than as much again would have been evolved and delivered to paper, but that, for the last six or eight months, I have been compelled to break off our weekly meeting, from the necessity of writing (alas! alas! of attempting to write) for purposes, and on the subjects, of the passing day. Of my poetic works I would fain finish the *Christabel*! Alas! for the proud time when I planned, when I had present to my mind, the materials, as well as the scheme, of the Hymns entitled *Spirit*, *Sun*, *Earth*, *Air*, *Water*, *Fire* and *Man*; and the Epic Poem on what still appears to me the one only fit subject remaining for an epic poem—Jerusalem besieged and destroyed by Titus.

To the same

Reminiscences

4 *March*, 1822.

My dearest Friend,

I have been much more than ordinarily unwell for more than a week past—my sleeps worse than my vigils, my nights than my days;

—— The night's dismay
Sadden'd and stunned the intervening day;

but last night I had not only a calmer night, without roaming in my dreams through any of Swedenborg's Hells *modérés*; but arose this morning lighter and with a sense of *relief*. . . .

I shall make you smile, as I did dear Mary Lamb, when I say that you sometimes mistake my position. As individual to individual, from my childhood, I do not remember feeling myself either superior or inferior to any human being; except by an act of my own will in cases of real or imagined moral or intellectual superiority. In regard to worldly rank, from eight years old to nineteen, I was habituated, nay, naturalised, to look up to men circumstanced as you are, as my superiors—a large number of our governors, and almost *all* of those whom we regarded as greater men still, and whom we saw most of, *viz.* our committee governors, were such—and as neither awake nor asleep have I any other feelings than what I had at Christ's Hospital, I distinctly remember that I felt a little flush of pride and consequence—just like what we used to feel at school when the boys came running to us—'Coleridge! here's your friends want you—they are quite *grand*,' or 'It is quite a *lady*'—when I first heard who you were, and laughed at myself for it with that pleasurable sensation that, spite of my sufferings at that school, still accompanies any sudden re-awakening of our school-boy feelings and notions. And oh, from sixteen to nineteen what hours of Paradise had Allen and I in escorting the Miss Evanses home on a Saturday, who were then at a milliner's whom we used to think, and who I believe really was, such a nice lady;—and we used to carry thither, of a summer morning, the

pillage of the flower gardens within six miles of town, with Sonnet or Love Rhyme wrapped round the nose-gay. To be feminine, kind, and genteelly (what I should now call neatly) dressed, these were the only things to which my head, heart, or imagination had any polarity, and what I was then, I still am.

God bless you and yours.

ROBERT SOUTHEY

1774–1843

To Joseph Cottle

Question of copyrights

Greta Hall, 20 *April*, 1808.

My dear Cottle, . . .

What you say of my copyrights affected me very much. Dear Cottle, set your heart at rest on that subject. It ought to be at rest. These were yours, fairly bought, and fairly sold. You bought them on the chance of their success, which no London bookseller would have done; and had they not been bought, they could not have been published at all. Nay, if you had not purchased *Joan of Arc*, the poem never would have existed, nor should I, in all probability, ever have obtained that reputation which is the capital on which I subsist, nor that power which enables me to support it.

But this is not all. Do you suppose, Cottle, that I have forgotten those true and most essential acts of friendship which you showed me when I stood most in need of them? Your house was my house when I had no other. The very money with which I bought my wedding-ring, and paid my marriage fees, was supplied by you. It was with your sisters I left Edith during my six months' absence, and for the six months after my return it was from you that I received, week

by week, the little on which we lived, till I was enabled to live by other means. It is not the settling of a cash account that can cancel obligations like these. You are in the habit of preserving your letters, and if you were not, I would entreat you to preserve *this*, that it might be seen hereafter. Sure I am, there never was a more generous or a kinder heart than yours; and you will believe me when I add, that there does not live that man upon earth, whom I remember with more gratitude and more affection. My heart throbs and my eyes burn with these recollections. Good night! my dear old friend and benefactor.

To John May

Waterloo

Liège, 6 *Oct.* 1815. Six p.m.

My dear Friend,

I have a happy habit of making the best of all things; and being just at this time as uncomfortable as the dust and bustle, and all the disagreeables of an inn in a large filthy manufacturing city can make me, I have called for pen, ink, and paper, and am actually writing in the bar, the door open to the yard opposite to this unwiped table, the doors open to the public room, where two men are dining, and talking French, and a woman servant at my elbow is lighting a fire for our party. Presently the folding-doors are to be shut, the ladies are to descend from their chambers, the bar will be kept appropriated to our house, the male part of the company will get into good humour, dinner will be ready, and then I must lay

aside the grey goose-quill. As a preliminary to these promised comforts, the servant is mopping the hearth, which is composed (like a tesselated pavement) of little bricks about two inches long by half an inch wide, set within a broad black stone frame. The fuel is of fire-balls, a mixture of pulverized coal and clay. I have seen a great deal and heard a great deal,—more, indeed, than I can keep pace with in my journal, though I strive hard to do it; but I minute down short notes in my pencil-book with all possible care, and hope, in the end, to lose nothing. . . .

Flanders is a most interesting country. Bruges, the most striking city I have ever seen, an old city in perfect preservation. It seems as if not a house had been built during the last two centuries, and not a house suffered to pass to decay. The poorest people seem to be well lodged, and there is a general air of sufficiency, cleanliness, industry, and comfort, which I have never seen in any other place. The cities have grown worse as we advanced. At Namur we reached a dirty city, situated in a romantic country; the Meuse there reminded me of the Thames from your delightful house, an island in size and shape resembling that upon which I have often wished for a grove of poplars, coming just in the same position. From thence along the river to this abominable place, the country is, for the greater part, as lovely as can be imagined. . . .

Our weather hitherto has been delightful. This was especially fortunate at Waterloo and at Ligny, where we had much ground to walk over. It would surprise you to see how soon nature has recovered from the injuries of war. The ground

is ploughed and sown, and grain and flowers and seeds already growing over the field of battle, which is still strewn with vestiges of the slaughter, caps, cartridges, boxes, hats, &c. We picked up some French cards and some bullets, and we purchased a French pistol and two of the eagles which the infantry wear upon their caps. What I felt upon this ground, it would be difficult to say; what I saw, and still more what I heard, there is no time at present for saying. In prose and in verse you shall some day hear the whole. At Les Quatre Bras, I saw two graves, which probably the dogs or the swine had opened. In the one were the ribs of a human body, projecting through the mould; in the other, the whole skeleton exposed. Some of our party told me of a third, in which the worms were at work, but I shrunk from the sight. You will rejoice to hear that the English are as well spoken of for their deportment in peace as in war. It is far otherwise with the Prussians. Concerning them there is but one opinion; their brutality is said to exceed that of the French, and of their intolerable insolence I have heard but too many proofs. That abominable old Frederic made them a military nation, and this is the inevitable consequence. This very day we passed a party on their way towards France—some hundred or two. Two gentlemen and two ladies of the country, in a carriage, had come up with them; and these ruffians would not allow them to pass, but compelled them to wait and follow the slow pace of foot soldiers! This we ourselves saw. Next to the English, the Belgians have the best character for discipline. . . .

I bought at Bruges a French History of Brazil,

just published by M. Alphonse de Beauchamp, in 3 vols. 8vo. He says, in his Preface, that having finished the first two volumes, he thought it advisable to see if any new light had been thrown upon the subject by modern authors. Meantime, a compilation upon this history had appeared in England, but the English author, Mr. Southey, had brought no new lights; he had promised much for his second volume, but the hope of literary Europe had been again deceived, for this second volume, so emphatically promised, had not appeared. I dare say no person regrets this delay so much as M. Beauchamp, he having stolen the whole of his two first volumes, and about the third part of the other, from the very Mr. Southey whom he abuses. He has copied my references as the list of his own authorities (MSS. and all), and he has committed blunders which prove, beyond all doubt, that he does not understand Portuguese. I have been much diverted by this fellow's impudence.

The table is laid, and the knives and forks rattling a pleasant note of preparation, as the woman waiter arranges them.

God bless you! I have hurried through the sheet, and thus pleasantly beguiled what would have been a very unpleasant hour. We are all well, and your god-daughter has seen a live emperor at Brussels. I feel the disadvantage of speaking French ill, and understanding it by the ear worse. Nevertheless, I speak it without remorse, make myself somehow or other understood, and get at what I want to know. Once more, God bless you, my dear friend.

To Henry Taylor

Anastasius Hope

Keswick, 15 *July*, 1831.

. . . Have you seen the strange book which Anastasius Hope left for publication, and which his representatives, in spite of all dissuasion, have published ? His notion of immortality and heaven is, that at the consummation of all things he, and you, and I, and John Murray, and Nebuchadnezzar, and Lambert the fat man, and the living skeleton, and Queen Elizabeth, and the Hottentot Venus, and Thurtell, and Probert, and the twelve Apostles, and the noble army of martyrs, and Genghis Khan, and all his armies, and Noah with all his ancestors and all his posterity—yea, all men and all women, and all children that have ever been or ever shall be, saints and sinners alike—are all to be put together, and made into one great celestial eternal human being. He does not seem to have known how nearly this approaches to Swedenborg's fancy. I do not like the scheme. I don't like the notion of being mixed up with Hume, and Hunt, and Whittle Harvey, and Philpotts, and Lord Althorpe, and the Huns, and the Hottentots, and the Jews, and the Philistines, and the Scotch, and the Irish. God forbid ! I hope to be I myself ; I, in an English heaven, with you yourself—you, and some others, without whom heaven would be no heaven to me. God bless you !

To Edward Moxon

Recollections of the Lambs

Keswick, 2 *Feb.* 1836.

My dear Sir,

I have been too closely engaged in clearing off the second volume of Cowper to reply to your inquiries concerning poor Lamb sooner. His acquaintance with Coleridge began at Christ's Hospital; Lamb was some two years, I think, his junior. Whether he was ever one of the *Grecians* there, might be ascertained, I suppose, by inquiring. My own impression is, that he was not. Coleridge introduced me to him in the winter of 1794–5, and to George Dyer also, from whom, if his memory has not failed, you might probably learn more of Lamb's early history than from any other person. Lloyd, Wordsworth, and Hazlitt became known to him through their connexion with Coleridge.

When I saw the family (one evening only, and at that time), they were lodging somewhere near Lincoln's Inn, on the western side (I forget the street), and were evidently in uncomfortable circumstances. The father and mother were both living; and I have some dim recollection of the latter's invalid appearance. The father's senses had failed him before that time. He published some poems in quarto. Lamb showed me once an imperfect copy: the *Sparrow's Wedding* was the title of the longest piece, and this was the author's favourite; he liked, in his dotage, to hear Charles read it.

His most familiar friend, when I first saw him,

was White, who held some office at Christ's Hospital, and continued intimate with him as long as he lived. You know what Elia says of him. He and Lamb were joint authors of the *Original Letters of Falstaff*. Lamb, I believe, first appeared as an author in the second edition of Coleridge's *Poems* (Bristol, 1797), and, secondly, in the little volume of blank verse with Lloyd (1798). Lamb, Lloyd, and White were inseparable in 1798; the two latter at one time lodged together, though no two men could be imagined more unlike each other. Lloyd had no drollery in his nature; White seemed to have nothing else. You will easily understand how Lamb could sympathize with both.

Lloyd, who used to form sudden friendships, was all but a stranger to me, when unexpectedly he brought Lamb down to visit me at a little village (Burton) near Christchurch, in Hampshire, where I was lodging in a very humble cottage. This was in the summer of 1797, and then, or in the following year, my correspondence with Lamb began. I saw more of him in 1802 than at any other time, for I was then six months resident in London. His visit to this county was before I came to it; it must have been either in that or in the following year: it was to Lloyd and to Coleridge.

I had forgotten one of his schoolfellows, who is still living—C. V. Le Grice, a clergyman at or near Penzance. From him you might learn something of his boyhood.

Cottle has a good likeness of Lamb, in chalk, taken by an artist named Robert Hancock, about the year 1798. It looks older than Lamb was at that time; but he was old-looking.

Coleridge introduced him to Godwin, shortly after the first number of the *Anti-Jacobin Magazine and Review* was published, with a caricature of Gillray's, in which Coleridge and I were introduced with asses' heads, and Lloyd and Lamb as toad and frog. Lamb got warmed with whatever was on the table, became disputatious, and said things to Godwin which made him quietly say, 'Pray, Mr. Lamb, are you toad or frog ?' Mrs. Coleridge will remember the scene, which was to her sufficiently uncomfortable. But the next morning S. T. C. called on Lamb, and found Godwin breakfasting with him, from which time their intimacy began.

His angry letter to me in the *Magazine* arose out of a notion that an expression of mine in the *Quarterly Review* would hurt the sale of *Elia*; some one, no doubt, had said that it would. I meant to serve the book, and very well remember how the offence happened. I had written that it wanted nothing to render it altogether delightful but a *saner* religious feeling. *This* would have been the proper word if any other person had written the book. Feeling its extreme unfitness as soon as it was written, I altered it immediately for the first word which came into my head, intending to remodel the sentence when it should come to me in the proof; and that proof never came. There can be no objection to your printing all that passed upon the occasion, beginning with the passage in the *Quarterly Review*, and giving his letter.

I have heard Coleridge say that, in a fit of derangement, Lamb fancied himself to be young Norval. He told me this in relation to one of his poems.

If you will print my lines to him upon his *Album Verses*, I will send you a corrected copy. You received his letters, I trust, which Cuthbert took with him to town in October. I wish they had been more, and wish, also, that I had more to tell you concerning him, and what I have told were of more value. But it is from such fragments of recollection, and such imperfect notices, that the materials for biography must, for the most part, be collected.

CHARLES LAMB

1775–1834

To Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Temporary frenzy

27 *May*, 1796.

. . . Coleridge ! I know not what suffering scenes you have gone through at Bristol. My life has been somewhat diversified of late. The six weeks that finished last year and began this, your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a madhouse, at Hoxton. I am got somewhat rational now, and don't bite anyone. But mad I was ! And many a vagary my imagination played with me, enough to make a volume, if all were told. My sonnets I have extended to the number of nine since I saw you, and will some day communicate to you. I am beginning a poem in blank verse, which, if I finish, I publish. . . . Coleridge ! it may convince you of my regards for you when I tell you my head ran on you in my madness, as much almost as on another person, who I am inclined to think was the more immediate cause of my temporary frenzy.

To the same

A friend in need

Thursday, 11 *June*, 1796.

. . . After all, you cannot, nor ever will, write anything with which I shall be so delighted as what I have heard yourself repeat. You came to

town, and I saw you at a time when your heart was yet bleeding with recent wounds. Like yourself, I was sore galled with disappointed hope. You had

> —— many an holy lay
> That, mourning, soothed the mourner on his way;

I had ears of sympathy to drink them in, and they yet vibrate pleasant on the sense. When I read in your little volume your nineteenth effusion, or the twenty-eighth or twenty-ninth, or what you call the *Sigh*, I think I hear *you* again. I image to myself the little smoky room at the *Salutation and Cat*, where we have sat together through the winter nights, beguiling the cares of life with Poesy. When you left London, I felt a dismal void in my heart. I found myself cut off, at one and the same time, from two most dear to me. 'How blest with ye the path could I have trod of quiet life!' In your conversation you had blended so many pleasant fancies that they cheated me of my grief. But in your absence the tide of melancholy rushed in again, and did its worst mischief by overwhelming my reason. I have recovered, but feel a stupor that makes me indifferent to the hopes and fears of this life. I sometimes wish to introduce a religious turn of mind, but habits are strong things, and my religious fervours are confined, alas! to some fleeting moments of occasional solitary devotion. A correspondence, opening with you, has roused me a little from my lethargy, and made me conscious of existence. Indulge me in it: I will not be very troublesome! At some future time I will amuse you with an account, as full as my memory will permit, of the strange turn my frenzy took. I look back upon it at times with a gloomy

kind of envy: for, while it lasted, I had many, many hours of pure happiness. Dream not, Coleridge, of having tasted all the grandeur and wildness of fancy till you have gone mad! All now seems to me vapid, comparatively so.

To the same

The tragedy

27 *Sept.* 1796.

My dearest Friend,

White, or some of my friends, or the public papers, by this time may have informed you of the terrible calamities that have fallen on our family. I will only give you the outlines: My poor dear, dearest sister, in a fit of insanity, has been the death of our own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a madhouse, from whence I fear she must be moved to an hospital. God has preserved to me my senses; I eat, and drink, and sleep, and have my judgement, I believe, very sound. My poor father was slightly wounded, and I am left to take care of him and my aunt. Mr. Norris, of the Bluecoat School, has been very kind to us, and we have no other friend; but, thank God, I am very calm and composed, and able to do the best that remains to do. Write as religious a letter as possible, but no mention of what is gone and done with. With me 'the former things are passed away', and I have something more to do than to feel.

God Almighty have us in His keeping!

Mention nothing of poetry. I have destroyed

every vestige of past vanities of that kind. Do as you please, but if you publish, publish mine (I give free leave) without name or initial, and never send me a book, I charge you.

Your own judgement will convince you not to take any notice of this yet to your dear wife. You look after your family; I have reason and strength left to take care of mine. I charge you, don't think of coming to see me. Write. I will not see you if you come. God Almighty love you and all of us!

To William Wordsworth

The delights of London

30 *Jan.* 1801.

I ought before this to have replied to your very kind invitation into Cumberland. With you and your sister I could gang anywhere; but I am afraid whether I shall ever be able to afford so desperate a journey. Separate from the pleasure of your company, I don't much care if I never see a mountain in my life. I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments as any of you mountaineers can have done with dead Nature. The lighted shops of the Strand and Fleet Street; the innumerable trades, tradesmen, and customers, coaches, waggons, playhouses; all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden; the very women of the Town; the watchmen, drunken scenes, rattles; —life awake, if you awake, at all hours of the night; the crowds, the very dirt and mud, the sun shining upon houses and pavements, the print-

shops, the old book-stalls, parsons cheapening books, coffee-houses, steams of soups from kitchens, the pantomimes—London itself a pantomime and a masquerade—all these things work themselves into my mind, and feed me, without a power of satiating me. The wonder of these sights impels me often into night-walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fullness of joy at so much life. All these emotions must be strange to you; so are your rural emotions to me. But consider, what must I have been doing all my life, not to have lent great portions of my heart with usury to such scenes?

My attachments are all local, purely local. I have no passion (or have had none since I was in love, and then it was the spurious engendering of poetry and books) to groves and valleys. The rooms where I was born, the furniture which has been before my eyes all my life, a book-case which has followed me about like a faithful dog, (only exceeding him in knowledge,) wherever I have moved, old chairs, old tables, streets, squares, where I have sunned myself, my old school,—these are my mistresses,—have I not enough, without your mountains? I do not envy you. I should pity you, did I not know that the mind will make friends of anything. Your sun, and moon, and skies, and hills, and lakes, affect me no more, or scarcely come to me in more venerable characters, than as a gilded room with tapestry and tapers, where I might live with handsome visible objects. I consider the clouds above me but as a roof beautifully painted, but unable to satisfy the mind: and at last, like the pictures of the apartment of a connoisseur, unable to afford him any longer a

pleasure. So fading upon me, from disuse, have been the beauties of Nature, as they have been confinedly called; so ever fresh, and green, and warm are all the inventions of men, and assemblies of men in this great city. I should certainly have laughed with dear Joanna.

Give my kindest love, and my sister's, to D. and yourself; and a kiss from me to little Barbara Lewthwaite. Thank you for liking my play!

To Thomas Manning

At the Lakes

London, 24 *Sept.* 1802.

My dear Manning,

Since the date of my last letter I have been a traveller. A strong desire seized me of visiting remote regions. My first impulse was to go and see Paris. It was a trivial objection to my aspiring mind, that I did not understand a word of the language, since I certainly intend some time in my life to see Paris, and equally certainly intend never to learn the language; therefore that could be no objection. However, I am very glad I did not go, because you had left Paris (I see) before I could have set out. I believe Stoddart promising to go with me another year prevented that plan. My next scheme (for to my restless, ambitious mind London was become a bed of thorns) was to visit the far-famed peak in Derbyshire, where the Devil sits, they say, without breeches. *This* my purer mind rejected as indelicate. And my final resolve was a tour to the Lakes. I set out with Mary to Keswick, without giving Coleridge any notice, for

my time, being precious, did not admit of it. He received us with all the hospitality in the world, and gave up his time to show us all the wonders of the country. He dwells upon a small hill by the side of Keswick, in a comfortable house, quite enveloped on all sides by a net of mountains: great floundering bears and monsters they seemed, all couchant and asleep. We got in in the evening, travelling in a post-chaise from Penrith, in the midst of a gorgeous sunshine, which transmuted all the mountains into colours, purple, &c., &c. We thought we had got into fairy-land. But that went off (as it never came again; while we stayed we had no more fine sunsets); and we entered Coleridge's comfortable study just in the dusk, when the mountains were all dark with clouds upon their heads. Such an impression I never received from objects of sight before, nor do I suppose I can ever again. Glorious creatures, fine old fellows, Skiddaw, &c. I shall never forget ye, how ye lay about that night, like an intrenchment; gone to bed, as it seemed for the night, but promising that ye were to be seen in the morning. Coleridge had got a blazing fire in his study; which is a large, antique, ill-shaped room, with an old-fashioned organ, never played upon, big enough for a church, shelves of scattered folios, an Æolian harp, and an old sofa, half bed, &c. And all looking out upon the last fading view of Skiddaw, and his broad-breasted brethren: what a night! Here we stayed three full weeks, in which time I visited Wordsworth's cottage, where we stayed a day or two with the Clarksons (good people, and most hospitable, at whose house we tarried one day and night), and saw Lloyd. The Wordsworths were gone to Calais.

They have since been in London, and passed much time with us: he is now gone into Yorkshire to be married. So we have seen Keswick, Grasmere, Ambleside, Ulswater (where the Clarksons live), and a place at the other end of Ulswater; I forget the name; to which we travelled on a very sultry day, over the middle of Helvellyn. We have clambered up to the top of Skiddaw, and I have waded up the bed of Lodore. In fine, I have satisfied myself that there is such a thing as that which tourists call *romantic*, which I very much suspected before: they make such a spluttering about it, and toss their splendid epithets around them, till they give as dim a light as at four o'clock next morning the lamps do after an illumination. Mary was excessively tired when she got about half-way up Skiddaw, but we came to a cold rill (than which nothing can be imagined more cold, running over cold stones), and with the reinforcement of a draught of cold water, she surmounted it most manfully. Oh, its fine black head, and the bleak air atop of it, with a prospect of mountains all about and about, making you giddy; and then Scotland afar off, and the border countries so famous in song and ballad! It was a day that will stand out, like a mountain, I am sure, in my life. But I am returned (I have now been come home near three weeks; I was a month out), and you cannot conceive the degradation I felt at first, from being accustomed to wander free as air among mountains, and bathe in rivers without being controlled by any one, to come home and *work*. I felt very *little*. I had been dreaming I was a very great man. But that is going off, and I find I shall conform in time to that state of life to which

it has pleased God to call me. Besides, after all, Fleet Street and the Strand are better places to live in for good and all than amidst Skiddaw. Still, I turn back to those great places where I wandered about, participating in their greatness. After all, I could not *live* in Skiddaw. I could spend a year, two, three years among them, but I must have a prospect of seeing Fleet Street at the end of that time, or I should mope and pine away, I know. Still, Skiddaw is a fine creature.

My habits are changing, I think, i. e. from drunk to sober. Whether I shall be happier or not remains to be proved. I shall certainly be more happy in a morning; but whether I shall not sacrifice the fat, and the marrow, and the kidneys, i. e. the night, glorious, care-drowning night, that heals all our wrongs, pours wine into our mortifications, changes the scene from indifferent and flat to bright and brilliant!—O Manning, if I should have formed a diabolical resolution, by the time you come to England, of not admitting any spirituous liquors into my house, will you be my guest on such shame-worthy terms? Is life, with such limitations, worth trying? The truth is, that my liquors bring a nest of friendly harpies about my house, who consume me. This is a pitiful tale to be read at St. Gothard, but it is just now nearest my heart. Fenwick is a ruined man. He is hiding himself from his creditors, and has sent his wife and children into the country. Fell, my other drunken companion (that has been: *nam hic caestus artemque repono*), is turned editor of a Naval Chronicle. Godwin continues a steady friend, though the same facility does not remain of visiting him often. X. has detached Marshall

from his house; Marshall, the man who went to sleep when the *Ancient Mariner* was reading; the old, steady, unalterable friend of the Professor. Holcraft is not yet come to town. I expect to see him, and will deliver your message. Things come crowding in to say, and no room for 'em. Some things are too little to be told, i. e. to have a preference; some are too big and circumstantial. Thanks for yours, which was most delicious. Would I had been with you, benighted, &c.! I fear my head is turned with wandering. I shall never be the same acquiescent being. Farewell. Write again quickly, for I shall not like to hazard a letter, not knowing where the fates have carried you. Farewell, my dear fellow.

To the same

Dissuasion from Tartary

19 *Feb.* 1803.

My dear Manning,

The general scope of your letter afforded no indications of insanity, but some particular points raised a scruple. For God's sake don't think any more of 'Independent Tartary'. What are you to do among such Ethiopians? Is there no *lineal descendant* of Prester John? Is the chair empty? Is the sword unswayed?—depend upon it they'll never make you their king, as long as any branch of that great stock is remaining. I tremble for your Christianity. . . . Read Sir John Mandeville's Travels to cure you, or come over to England. There is a Tartar-man now exhibiting at Exeter Change. Come and talk with him, and hear what

he says first. Indeed, he is no very favourable specimen of his countrymen! But perhaps the best thing you can do, is to *try* to get the idea out of your head. For this purpose repeat to yourself every night, after you have said your prayers, the words, Independent Tartary, Independent Tartary, two or three times, and associate with them the *idea* of *oblivion* ('t is Hartley's method with obstinate memories), or say, Independent, Independent, have I not already got an *independence*? That was a clever way of the old Puritans, pun-divinity. My dear friend, think what a sad pity it would be to bury such *parts* in heathen countries, among nasty, unconversable, horse-belching, Tartar-people! Some say they are Cannibals; and then, conceive a Tartar-fellow *eating* my friend, and adding the *cool malignity* of mustard and vinegar! I am afraid 't is the reading of Chaucer has misled you; his foolish stories about Cambuscan, and the ring, and the horse of brass. Believe me, there are no such things, 'tis all the poet's *invention*; but if there were such darling things as old Chaucer sings, I would *up* behind you on the horse of brass, and frisk off for Prester John's country. But these are all tales; a horse of brass never flew, and a king's daughter never talked with birds! The Tartars, really, are a cold, insipid, smouchy set. You'll be sadly moped (if you are not eaten) among them. Pray *try* and cure yourself. Take hellebore (the counsel is Horace's, 'twas none of my thought *originally*). Shave yourself oftener. Eat no saffron, for saffron-eaters contract a terrible Tartar-like yellow. Pray, to avoid the fiend. Eat nothing that gives the heart-burn. *Shave the upper*

lip. Go about like an European. Read no books of voyages (they are nothing but lies), only now and then a romance, to keep the fancy *under.* Above all, don't go to any sights of *wild beasts. That has been your ruin.* Accustom yourself to write familiar letters, on common subjects, to your friends in England, such as are of a moderate understanding. And think about common things more. . . . I supped last night with Rickman, and met a merry *natural* captain, who pleases himself vastly with once having made a pun at Otaheite in the O. language. 'T is the same man who said Shakespeare he liked, because he was so *much of the gentleman.* Rickman is a man 'absolute in all numbers'. I think I may one day bring you acquainted, if you do not go to Tartary first; for you'll never come back. Have a care, my dear friend, of Anthropophagi! their stomachs are always craving. 'T is terrible to be weighed out at five pence a-pound. To sit at table (the reverse of fishes in Holland), not as a guest, but as a meat.

God bless you: do come to England. Air and exercise may do great things. Talk with some minister. Why not your father?

God dispose all for the best. I have discharged my duty.

To Mrs. Wordsworth

Friends' importunities

East India House, 18 *Feb.* 1818.

My dear Mrs. Wordsworth,

I have repeatedly taken pen in hand to answer your kind letter. My sister should more properly have done it, but she having failed,

I consider myself answerable for her debts. I am now trying to do it in the midst of commercial noises, and with a quill which seems more ready to glide into arithmetical figures and names of gourds, cassia, cardemoms, aloes, ginger, or tea, than into kindly responses and friendly recollections. The reason why I cannot write letters at home, is, that I am never alone. Plato's—(I write to W.. W. now)—Plato's double-animal parted never longed more to be reciprocally re-united in the system of its first creation, than I sometimes do to be but for a moment single and separate. Except my morning's walk to the office, which is like treading on sands of gold for that reason, I am never so. I cannot walk home from office but some officious friend offers his unwelcome courtesies to accompany me. All the morning I am pestered. I could sit and gravely cast up sums in great books, or compare sum with sum, and write 'paid' against this, and 'unpaid' against t'other, and yet reserve in some corner of my mind 'some darling thoughts all my own',—faint memory of some passage in a book, or the tone of an absent friend's voice—a snatch of Miss Burrell's singing, or a gleam of Fanny Kelly's divine plain face. The two operations might be going on at the same time without thwarting, as the sun's two motions (earth's, I mean), or, as I sometimes turn round till I am giddy, in my back parlour, while my sister is walking longitudinally in the front; or, as the shoulder of veal twists round with the spit, while the smoke wreathes up the chimney. But there are a set of amateurs of the Belles Lettres—the gay science—who come to me as a sort of rendezvous, putting questions of

criticism, of British Institutions, Lalla Rookhs, &c. —what Coleridge said at the lecture last night— who have the form of reading men, but, for any possible use reading can be to them, but to talk of, might as well have been Ante-Cadmeans born, or have lain sucking out the sense of an Egyptian hieroglyph as long as the pyramids will last, before they should find it. These pests worrit me at business, and in all its intervals, perplexing my accounts, poisoning my little salutary warming-time at the fire, puzzling my paragraphs if I take a newspaper, cramming in between my own free thoughts and a column of figures, which had come to an amicable compromise but for them. Their noise ended, one of them, as I said, accompanies me home, lest I should be solitary for a moment; he at length takes his welcome leave at the door; up I go, mutton on table, hungry as hunter, hope to forget my cares, and bury them in the agreeable abstraction of mastication; knock at the door, in comes Mr. ——, or Mr. ——, or Demi-gorgon, or my brother, or somebody, to prevent my eating alone—a process absolutely necessary to my poor wretched digestion. O, the pleasure of eating alone!—eating my dinner alone! let me think of it. But in they come, and make it absolutely necessary that I should open a bottle of orange— for my meat turns into stone when anyone dines with me, if I have not wine. Wine can mollify stones; then *that* wine turns into acidity, acerbity, misanthropy, a hatred of my interrupters—(God bless 'em! I love some of 'em dearly), and with the hatred, a still greater aversion to their going away. Bad is the dead sea they bring upon me, choking and deadening, but worse is the deader

dry sand they leave me on, if they go before bed-time. Come never, I would say to these spoilers of my dinner; but if you come, never go! The fact is, this interruption does not happen very often; but every time it comes by surprise, that present bane of my life, orange wine, with all its dreary stifling consequences, follows. Evening company I should always like had I any mornings, but I am saturated with human faces (*divine* forsooth!) and voices all the golden morning; and five evenings in a week would be as much as I should covet to be in company, but I assure you that is a wonderful week in which I can get two, or one, to myself. I am never C. L., but always C. L. & Co. He who thought it not good for man to be alone, preserve me from the more prodigious monstrosity of being never by myself! I forget bed-time, but even there these sociable frogs clamber up to annoy me. Once a week, generally some singular evening that, being alone, I go to bed at the hour I ought always to be a-bed; just close to my bed-room window is the club-room of a public-house, where a set of singers, I take them to be chorus singers of the two theatres (it must be *both of them*), begin their orgies. They are a set of fellows (as I conceive) who, being limited by their talents to the burthen of the song at the play-houses, in revenge have got the common popular airs by Bishop, or some cheap composer, arranged for choruses, that is, to be sung all in chorus. At least, I never can catch any of the text of the plain song, nothing but the Babylonish choral howl at the tail on't. 'That fury being quench'd'—the howl I mean—a burden succeeds of shouts and clapping, and knocking of

the table. At length overtasked nature drops under it, and escapes for a few hours into the society of the sweet silent creatures of dreams, which go away with mocks and mows at cockcrow. And then I think of the words Christabel's father used (bless me, I have dipt in the wrong ink !) to say every morning by way of variety when he awoke :

> Every knell, the Baron saith,
> Wakes us up to a world of death—

or something like it. All I mean by this senseless interrupted tale, is, that by my central situation I am a little over-companied. Not that I have any animosity against the good creatures that are so anxious to drive away the harpy solitude from me. I like 'em, and cards, and a cheerful glass ; but I mean merely to give you an idea between office confinement and after-office society, how little time I can call my own. I mean only to draw a picture, not to make an inference. I would not that I know of have it otherwise. I only wish sometimes I could exchange some of my faces and voices for the faces and voices which a late visitation brought most welcome, and carried away, leaving regret, but more pleasure, even a kind of gratitude, at being so often favoured with that kind northern visitation. My London faces and noises don't hear me—I mean no disrespect, or I should explain myself, that instead of their return 220 times a year, and the return of W. W., &c., seven times in 104 weeks, some more equal distribution might be found. I have scarce room to put in Mary's kind love, and my poor name . . .

—— goes on lecturing. . . . I mean to hear some of the course, but lectures are not

much to my taste, whatever the lecturer may be. If *read*, they are dismal flat, and you can't think why you are brought together to hear a man read his works, which you could read so much better at leisure yourself; if delivered extempore, I am always in pain, lest the gift of utterance should suddenly fail the orator in the middle, as it did me at the dinner given in honour of me at the London Tavern. 'Gentlemen,' said I, and there I stopped; the rest my feelings were under the necessity of supplying. Mrs. Wordsworth *will* go on, kindly haunting us with visions of seeing the lakes once more, which never can be realised. Between us there is a great gulf, not of inexplicable moral antipathies and distances, I hope, as there seemed to be between me and that gentleman concerned in the Stamp Office, that I so strangely recoiled from at Haydon's. I think I had an instinct that he was the head of an office. I hate all such people—accountants' deputy accountants. The dear abstract notion of the East India Company, as long as she is unseen, is pretty, rather poetical; but as she makes herself manifest by the persons of such beasts, I loathe and detest her as the scarlet what-do-you-call-her of Babylon. I thought, after abridging us of all our red-letter days, they had done their worst; but I was deceived in the length to which heads of offices, those true liberty-haters, can go. They are the tyrants; not Ferdinand, nor Nero. By a decree passed this week, they have abridged us of the immemorially-observed custom of going at one o'clock of a Saturday, the little shadow of a holiday left us. Dear W. W., be thankful for liberty.

To Samuel Taylor Coleridge

The famous pigling

9 *March*, 1822.

Dear Coleridge,

It gives me great satisfaction to hear that the pig turned out so well: they are such interesting creatures at a certain age. What a pity such buds should blow out into the maturity of rank bacon! You had all some of the crackling and brain sauce. Did you remember to rub it with butter, and gently dredge it a little, just before the crisis? Did the eyes come away kindly with no Oedipean avulsion? Was the crackling the colour of the ripe pomegranate? Had you no complement of boiled neck of mutton before it, to blunt the edge of delicate desire? Did you flesh maiden teeth in it? Not that *I* sent the pig, or can form the remotest guess what part Owen could play in the business. I never knew him give anything away in my life. He would not begin with strangers. I suspect the pig, after all, was meant for me; but at the unlucky juncture of time being absent, the present somehow went round to Highgate. To confess an honest truth, a pig is one of those things which I could never think of sending away. Teal, widgeon, snipes, barn-door fowls, ducks, geese—your tame villatic things—Welsh mutton, collars of brawn, sturgeon, fresh or pickled, your potted char, Swiss cheeses, French pies, early grapes, muscadines, I impart as freely unto my friends as to myself. They are but self extended, but pardon me if I stop somewhere. Where the fine feeling of

benevolence giveth a higher smack than the sensual rarity, there my friends (or any good man) may command me ; but pigs are pigs, and I myself therein am nearest to myself. Nay, I should think it an affront, an undervaluing done to Nature who bestowed such a boon upon me, if in a churlish mood I parted with the precious gift. One of the bitterest pangs of remorse I ever felt was when a child—when my kind old aunt had strained her pocket-strings to bestow a sixpenny whole plum-cake upon me. In my way home through the Borough I met a venerable old man, not a mendicant, but thereabouts ; a look-beggar, not a verbal petitionist ; and in the coxcombry of taught charity I gave away the cake to him. I walked on a little in all the pride of an Evangelical peacock, when of a sudden my old aunt's kindness crossed me ; the sum it was to her ; the pleasure she had a right to expect that I—not the old impostor—should take in eating her cake ; the ingratitude by which, under the colour of a Christian virtue, I had frustrated her cherished purpose. I sobbed, wept, and took it to heart so grievously, that I think I never suffered the like ; and I was right. It was a piece of unfeeling hypocrisy, and it proved a lesson to me ever after. The cake has long been masticated, consigned to the dunghill with the ashes of that unseasonable pauper. But when Providence, who is better to us than all our aunts, gives me a pig, remembering my temptation and my fall, I shall endeavour to act towards it more in the spirit of the donor's purpose.

Yours (short of pig) to command in every thing.

To Bernard Barton

A blessing in disguise

9 *Jan.* 1823.

'Throw yourself on the world without any rational plan of support, beyond what the chance employ of booksellers would afford you'!!!

Throw yourself rather, my dear sir, from the steep Tarpeian rock, slap-dash headlong upon iron spikes. If you have but five consolatory minutes between the desk and the bed, make much of them, and live a century in them, rather than turn slave to the booksellers. They are Turks and Tartars when they have poor authors at their beck. Hitherto you have been at arm's length from them. Come not within their grasp. I have known many authors want for bread, some repining, others envying the blessed security of a counting-house, all agreeing they had rather have been tailors, weavers—what not? rather than the things they were. I have known some starved, some to go mad, one dear friend literally dying in a workhouse. You know not what a rapacious, dishonest set these booksellers are. Ask even Southey, who (a single case almost) has made a fortune by book-drudgery, what he has found them. Oh, you know not, may you never know, the miseries of subsisting by authorship! 'T is a pretty appendage to a situation like yours or mine; but a slavery, worse than all slavery, to be a bookseller's dependant, to drudge your brains for pots of ale, and breasts of mutton, *to change your* FREE THOUGHTS *and* VOLUNTARY NUMBERS *for ungracious* TASK-WORK. Those fellows hate *us*. The reason I take to be, that contrary to other trades, in which the master gets all the credit

(a jeweller or silversmith for instance,) and the journeyman, who really does the fine work, is in the background: in *our* work the world gives all the credit to us, whom *they* consider as *their* journeymen, and therefore do they hate us, and cheat us, and oppress us, and would wring the blood of us out, to put another sixpence in their mechanic pouches! . . .

Keep to your bank, and the bank will keep you. Trust not to the public; you may hang, starve, drown yourself, for anything that worthy *personage* cares. I bless every star, that Providence, not seeing good to make me independent, has seen it next good to settle me upon the stable foundation of Leadenhall. Sit down, good B. B., in the banking-office: what! is there not from six to eleven p.m. six days in the week, and is there not all Sunday? Fie, what a superfluity of man's time, if you could think so! Enough for relaxation, mirth, converse, poetry, good thoughts, quiet thoughts. O the corroding, torturing, tormenting thoughts, that disturb the brain of the unlucky wight who must draw upon it for daily sustenance! Henceforth I retract all my fond complaints of mercantile employment; look upon them as lover's quarrels. I was but half in earnest. Welcome dead timber of the desk, that makes me live. A little grumbling is a wholesome medicine for the spleen, but in my inner heart do I approve and embrace this our close, but unharassing way of life. I am quite serious. If you can send me Fox, I will not keep it *six weeks*, and will return it, with warm thanks to yourself and friend, without blot or dog's-ear. You will much oblige me by this kindness.

To the same

A cold

9 *Jan.* 1824.

Dear B. B.,

Do you know what it is to succumb under an insurmountable day-mare,—' a whoreson lethargy ', Falstaff calls it,—an indisposition to do anything, or to be anything,—a total deadness and distaste,—a suspension of vitality,—an indifference to locality,—a numb, soporifical, good-for-nothingness,—an ossification all over,—an oyster-like insensibility to the passing events,—a mind-stupor,—a brawny defiance to the needles of a thrusting-in conscience ? Did you ever have a very bad cold, with a total irresolution to submit to water-gruel processes ? This has been for many weeks my lot, and my excuse ; my fingers drag heavily over this paper, and to my thinking it is three-and-twenty furlongs from here to the end of this demi-sheet. I have not a thing to say ; no thing is of more importance than another ; I am flatter than a denial or a pancake ; emptier than Judge ——'s wig when the head is in it ; duller than a country stage when the actors are off it ; a cipher, an O ! I acknowledge life at all, only by an occasional convulsional cough, and a permanent phlegmatic pain in the chest. I am weary of the world ; life is weary of me. My day is gone into twilight, and I don't think it worth the expense of candles. My wick hath a thief in it, but I can't muster courage to snuff it. I inhale suffocation ; I can't distinguish veal from mutton ; nothing interests me. 'T is twelve o'clock, and Thurtell is just now coming out upon the New

Drop, Jack Ketch alertly tucking up his greasy sleeves to do the last office of mortality, yet cannot I elicit a groan or a moral reflection. If you told me the world will be at an end to-morrow, I should just say, 'Will it ?' I have not volition enough left to dot my *i's*, much less to comb my eyebrows ; my eyes are set in my head ; my brains are gone out to see a poor relation in Moorfields, and they did not say when they'd come back again ; my skull is a Grub Street attic to let—not so much as a joint stool left in it ; my hand writes, not I, from habit, as chickens run about a little, when their heads are off. O for a vigorous fit of gout, colic, toothache,—an earwig in my auditory, a fly in my visual organs ; pain is life—the sharper, the more evidence of life ; but this apathy, this death ! Did you ever have an obstinate cold,—a six or seven weeks' unintermitting chill and suspension of hope, fear, conscience, and every thing ? Yet do I try all I can to cure it ; I try wine, and spirits, and smoking, and snuff in unsparing quantities, but they all only seem to make me worse instead of better. I sleep in a damp room, but it does me no good ; I come home late o' nights, but do not find any visible amendment ! . . .

It is just fifteen minutes after twelve ; Thurtell is by this time a good way on his journey, baiting at Scorpion perhaps ; Ketch is bargaining for his cast coat and waistcoat ; the Jew demurs at first at three half-crowns, but, on consideration that he may get somewhat by showing 'em in the town, finally closes.

WILLIAM HAZLITT

1778–1830

To Miss Sarah Stoddart

A love-letter

Tuesday night [*Jan.* 1808].

My dear Love,

Above a week has passed, and I have received no letter—not one of those letters 'in which I live, or have no life at all'. What is become of you? Are you married, hearing that I was dead (for so it has been reported)? Or are you gone into a nunnery? Or are you fallen in love with some of the amorous heroes of Boccaccio? Which of them is it? Is it with Chynon, who was transformed from a clown into a lover, and learned to spell by the force of beauty? Or with Lorenzo, the lover of Isabella, whom her three brethren hated (as your brother does me), who was a merchant's clerk? Or with Federigo Alberigi, an honest gentleman, who ran through his fortune, and won his mistress by cooking a fair falcon for her dinner, though it was the only means he had left of getting a dinner for himself? This last is the man; and I am the more persuaded of it, because I think I won your good liking myself by giving you an entertainment—of sausages, when I had no money to buy them with. Nay now, never deny it! Did I not ask your consent that very night after, and did you not give it? Well, I should be

confoundedly jealous of those fine gallants, if I did not know that a living dog is better than a dead lion; though, now I think of it, Boccaccio does not in general make much of his lovers: it is his women who are so delicious. I almost wish I had lived in those times, and had been a little *more amiable*. Now if a woman had written the book, it would not have had this effect upon me: the men would have been heroes and angels, and the women nothing at all. Isn't there some truth in that? Talking of departed loves, I met my old flame the other day in the street. I did dream of her *one* night since, and only one: every other night I have had the same dream I have had for these two months past. Now, if you are at all reasonable, this will satisfy you.

Thursday morning. The book is come. When I saw it I thought you had sent it back in a *huff*, tired out by my sauciness, and *coldness*, and delays, and were going to keep an account of dimities and sayes, or to salt pork and chronicle small beer as the dutiful wife of some fresh-looking, rural swain; so that you cannot think how surprised and pleased I was to find them all done. I liked your note as well or better than the extracts; it is just such a note as such a nice rogue as you ought to write after the *provocation* you had received. I would not give a pin for a girl 'whose cheeks never tingle', nor for myself if I could not make them tingle sometimes. Now, though I am always writing to you about 'lips and noses', and such sort of stuff, yet as I sit by my fireside (which I do generally eight or ten hours a day), I oftener think of you in a serious, sober light. For, indeed, I never love you so well as when I think of sitting

down with you to dinner on a boiled scrag-end of mutton, and hot potatoes. You please my fancy more then than when I think of you in —— no, you would never forgive me if I were to finish the sentence. Now I think of it, what do you mean to be dressed in when we are married? But it does not much matter! I wish you would let your hair grow; though perhaps nothing will be better than 'the same air and look with which at first my heart was took'. But now to business. I mean soon to call upon your brother *in form*, namely, as soon as I get quite well, which I hope to do in about another *fortnight*; and then I hope you will come up by the coach as fast as the horses can carry you, for I long mightily to be in your ladyship's presence—to vindicate my character. I think you had better sell the small house, I mean that at 4.10, and I will borrow £100. So that we shall set off merrily in spite of all the prudence of Edinburgh. Goodbye, little dear!

To his son

Marriage, and the choice of a profession

[1822.]

. . . If you ever marry, I would wish you to marry the woman you like. Do not be guided by the recommendations of friends. Nothing will atone for or overcome an original distaste. It will only increase from intimacy; and if you are to live separate, it is better not to come together. There is no use in dragging a chain through life, unless it binds one to the object we love. Choose a mistress from among your equals. You will be

able to understand her character better, and she will be more likely to understand yours. Those in an inferior station to yourself will doubt your good intentions, and misapprehend your plainest expressions. All that you swear is to them a riddle or downright nonsense. You cannot by any possibility translate your thoughts into their dialect. They will be ignorant of the meaning of half you say, and laugh at the rest. As mistresses, they will have no sympathy with you; and as wives, you can have none with them.

Women care nothing about poets, or philosophers, or politicians. They go by a man's looks and manner. Richardson calls them 'an eye-judging sex'; and I am sure he knew more about them than I can pretend to do. If you run away with a pedantic notion that they care a pin's point about your head or your heart, you will repent it too late. . . .

If I were to name one pursuit rather than another, I should wish you to be a good painter, if such a thing could be hoped. I have failed in this myself, and should wish you to be able to do what I have not—to paint like Claude, or Rembrandt, or Guido, or Vandyke, if it were possible. Artists, I think, who have succeeded in their chief object, live to be old, and are agreeable old men. Their minds keep alive to the last. Cosway's spirits never flagged till after ninety; and Nollekens, though nearly blind, passed all his mornings in giving directions about some group or bust in his workshop. You have seen Mr. Northcote, that delightful specimen of the last age. With what avidity he takes up his pencil, or lays it down again to talk of numberless things! His eye has not lost

its lustre, nor 'paled its ineffectual fire'. His body is but a shadow: he himself is a pure spirit. There is a kind of immortality about this sort of ideal and visionary existence that dallies with Fate and baffles the grim monster, Death. If I thought you could make as clever an artist, and arrive at such an agreeable old age as Mr. Northcote, I should declare at once for your devoting yourself to this enchanting profession; and in that reliance, should feel less regret at some of my own disappointments, and little anxiety on your account!

To Charles Cowden Clarke

The Life of Napoleon

7 *Dec.* [1827].

Dear Sir,

I thought all the world agreed with me at present that Buonaparte was better than the Bourbons, or that a tyrant was better than tyranny. In my opinion, no one of an understanding above the rank of a lady's waiting-maid could ever have doubted this, though I alone said it ten years ago. It might be impolicy then and now for what I know, for the world stick to an opinion in appearance long after they have given it up in reality. I should like to know whether the preface is thought impolitic by some one who agrees with me in the main point, or by some one who differs with me and makes this excuse not to have his opinion contradicted? In Paris (*jubes regina renovare dolorem*) the preface was thought a masterpiece, the best and only possible defence

of Buonaparte, and quite new *there*! It would be an impertinence in me to write a Life of Buonaparte after Sir W. without some such object as that expressed in the preface. After all, I do not care a *damn* about the preface. It will get me on four pages somewhere else. Shall I retract my opinion altogether, and forswear my own book? Rayner is right to cry out: I think I have tipped him fair and foul copy, a lean rabbit and a fat one. The remainder of vol. ii will be ready to go on with, but not the beginning of the third. The appendixes had better be at the end of the second vol. Pray get them if you can: you have my Sieyes, have you not? One of them is there. I have been nearly in the other world. My regret was 'to die and leave the world "rough" copy'. Otherwise I had thought of an epitaph and a good end. Hic jacent reliquiae mortales Gulielmi Hazlitt, auctoris non intelligibilis: natus Maidstoniae in comi [ta] tu Cantiae, Apr. 10, 1778. Obiit Winterslowe, Dec., 1827. I think of writing an epistle to C. Lamb, Esq., to say that I have passed near the shadowy world, and have had new impressions of the vanity of this, with hopes of a better. Don't you think this would be good policy? Don't mention it to the severe author of the '*Press*', a poem, but methinks the idea *arridet* Hone. He would give sixpence to see me floating, upon a pair of borrowed wings, half way between heaven and earth, and edifying the good people at my departure, whom I shall only scandalize by remaining. At present my study and contemplation is the leg of a stewed fowl. I have behaved like a saint, and been obedient to orders.

Non fit pugil, &c., I got a violent spasm by walking fifteen miles in the mud, and getting into a coach with an old lady who would have the window open. Delicacy, moderation, complaisance, the *suaviter in modo*, whisper it about, my dear Clarke, these are my faults and have been my ruin.

LEIGH HUNT

1784–1859

To Joseph Severn

A belated letter[1]

Vale of Health, Hampstead, 8 *March*, 1821

DEAR SEVERN,

You have concluded, of course, that I have sent no letters to Rome, because I was aware of the effect they would have on Keats's mind; and this is the principal cause; for, besides what I have been told about letters in Italy, I remember his telling me upon one occasion that, in his sick moments, he never wished to receive another letter, or ever to see another face, however friendly. But still I should have written to you, had I not been almost at death's door myself. You will imagine how ill I have been, when you hear that I have but just begun writing again for the *Examiner* and *Indicator*, after an interval of several months, during which my flesh wasted from me with sickness and melancholy. Judge how often I thought of Keats, and with what feelings. Mr. Brown tells me he is comparatively calm now, or rather quite so. If he can bear to hear of us, pray tell him; but he knows it already, and can put it in better language than any man. I hear that he does not like to be told that he may get better; nor is it to be wondered at, considering his firm persuasion that he shall not

[1] Keats died in February.

survive. He can only regard it as a puerile thing, and an insinuation that he shall die. But if his persuasion should happen to be no longer so strong, or if he can now put up with attempts to console him, of what I have said a thousand times, and what I still (upon my honour) think always, that I have seen too many instances of recovery from apparently desperate cases of consumption not to be in hope to the very last. If he still cannot bear this, tell him—tell that great poet and noble-hearted man—that we shall all bear his memory in the most precious part of our hearts, and that the world shall bow their heads to it, as our loves do. Or if this, again, will trouble his spirit, tell him that we shall never cease to remember and love him; and that, Christian or infidel, the most sceptical of us has faith enough in the high things that nature puts into our heads, to think all who are of one accord in mind or heart are journeying to one and the same place, and shall unite somewhere or other again, face to face, mutually conscious, mutually delighted. Tell him he is only before us on the road, as he is in everything else; or, whether you tell him the latter or no, tell him the former, and add that we shall never forget that he was so, and that we are coming after him. The tears are again in my eyes, and I must not afford to shed them. The next letter I write shall be more to yourself, and more refreshing to your spirits, which we are very sensible must have been greatly taxed. But whether your friend dies or not, it will not be among the least lofty of your recollections by-and-by that you helped to smooth the sick-bed of so fine a being. God bless you, dear Severn.

To Percy Bysshe Shelley

Outpourings of gratitude

Stonehouse, near Plymouth, 26 *March*, 1822

My dearest Friend,

Your letters always contain something delightful to me, whatever news they bring.

> Surgit *amici* aliquid, quod in ipsis *nubibus ardet*.

But I confess your latter ones have greatly relieved me on the subject you speak of. They only make me long, with an extreme Homeric longing, to be at Pisa,—I mean such an one as Achilles felt when he longed to be with his father,—sharp in his very limbs. We have secured a ship, the *David Walter*, which will call for us here, and sets sail from London in a fortnight. I have written by to-day's post with intelligence of it to Mrs. Fletcher, enclosing her the letter, and giving her the option of going on board in London, or here. I need not say we shall attend to her comforts in every respect. The same post also carries a letter to Mr. Gisborne, stating your wishes, and wonders respecting *Adonais*. If it is not published before I leave England, I will publish my criticism upon the Pisa copy,—a criticism which I think you will like. I take the opportunity of showing the public why Gifford's review spoke so bitterly of *Prometheus*, and why it pretends that the most metaphysical passage of your most metaphysical poem is a specimen of the clearness of your general style. The wretched priest-like cunning and undertoned malignity of that review of *Prometheus*

is indeed a homage paid to qualities which can so provoke it. The *Quarterly* pretends now, that it never meddles with you personally,—of course it never did! For this, *Blackwood* cries out upon it, contrasting its behaviour in those delicate matters with its own! This is better and better, and the public seem to think so; for these things, depend upon it, are getting better understood every day, and shall be better and better understood every day to come. One circumstance which helps to reconcile me to having been detained on this coast, is the opportunity it has given me to make your works speak for themselves wherever I could; and you are in high lustre, I assure you, with the most intelligent circles in Plymouth, ἀστὴρ ἑῷος. I have, indeed, been astonished to find how well prepared people of intelligence are to fall in with your aspirations, and despise the mistakes and rascally instincts of your calumniators. This place, for instance, abounds in *schoolmasters*, who appear, to a man, to be liberal to an extreme and esoterical degree. And such, there is reason to believe, is the case over the greater part of the kingdom, greatly, no doubt, owing to political causes. Think of the consequences of this with the rising generation. I delight in *Adonais*. It is the most Delphic poetry I have seen a long while; full of those embodyings of the most subtle and airy imaginations,—those arrestings and explanations of the most shadowy yearnings of our being—which are the most difficult of all things to put into words, and the most delightful when put. I do not know whether you are aware how fond I am of your song on the Skylark; but you ought, if Ollier sent you a copy of the enlarged *Calendar*

of Nature, which he published separately under the title of the *Months.* I tell you this, because I have not done half or a twentieth part of what I ought to have done to make your writings properly appreciated. But I intended to do more every day, and now that I am coming to you, I shall be *totus* in you and yours! For all good, and healthy, and industrious things, I will do such wonders, that I shall begin to believe I make some remote approach to something like a return for your kindness. Yet how can that be? At all events, I hope we shall all be the better for one another's society. Marianne, poor dear girl, is still very ailing and weak, but stronger upon the whole, she thinks, than when she first left London, and quite prepared and happy to set off on her spring voyage. She sends you part of her best love. I told her I supposed I must answer Marina's letter for her, but she is quite grand on the occasion, and vows she will do it herself, which, I assure you, will be the first time she has written a letter for many months. Ask Marina if she will be charitable, and write one to me. I will undertake to answer it with one double as long. But what am I talking about, when the captain speaks of sailing in a fortnight? I was led astray by her delightful letter to Marianne about walks, and duets, and violets, and ladies like violets. Am I indeed to see and be in the midst of all these beautiful things, ladies like lilies not excepted? And do the men in Italy really leave ladies to walk in those very amiable dry ditches by themselves? Oh! for a few strides, like those of Neptune, when he went from some place to some other place, and 'did it in three!' Dear Shelley, I am glad my

letter to Lord B. pleased you, though I do not know why you should so thank me for it. But you are ingenious in inventing claims for me upon your affection.

To Horace Smith

Shelley's death

Pisa, 25 *July*, 1822.

Dear Horace,

I trust that the first news of the dreadful calamity which has befallen us here will have been broken to you by report, otherwise I shall come upon you with a most painful abruptness ; but Shelley, my divine-minded friend, your friend, the friend of the universe, he has perished at sea. He was in a boat with his friend Captain Williams, going from Leghorn to Lerici, when a storm arose, and it is supposed the boat must have foundered. It was on the 8th instant, about four or five in the evening, they guess. A fisherman says he saw the boat a few minutes before it went down : he looked again and it was gone. He saw the boy they had with them aloft furling one of the sails. We hope his story is true, as their passage from life to death will then have been short ; and what adds to the hope is, that in S's pocket (for the bodies were both thrown on shore some days afterwards,—conceive our horrible certainty, after trying all we could to hope !) a copy of Keats's last volume, which he had borrowed of me to read on his passage, was found *open* and doubled back as if it had been thrust in, in the hurry of a surprise. God bless him ! I cannot help thinking of him as

if he were alive as much as ever, so unearthly he always appeared to me, and so seraphical a thing of the elements; and this is what all his friends say. But what we all feel, your own heart will tell you. . . .

It has been often feared that Shelley and Captain Williams would meet with some accident, they were so hazardous; but when they set out on the 8th, in the morning it was fine. Our dear friend was passionately fond of the sea, and has been heard to say he should like it to be his death-bed. . . .

To Mrs. Procter

Accepting an invitation

5 York Buildings, 13 *March* [1831].

My dear Mrs. Procter (for Madam, somehow, is not the thing),

I am most pleased to be reminded of my promise, which I must have made if you say I did. I suppose I have been coming to keep it ever since; but it is a long road from sorrow to joy, and one is apt to get confused on the road. Do you know your letter brought the tears into my eyes? I hardly know why, unless it was that I saw Procter had been pouring his kind heart into yours, and you said:—'We must have him here instead of the coffee-house, and plant him by the fire, and warm him like a stray bird till he sings.' But indeed a kind word affects me where many a hard thump does not. Nevertheless, you must not tell this, except to the very masculine or feminine; though if you do not take it as a

compliment to yourself,—I mean the confession of my weakness,—why, you are not Procter's wife, nor Mrs. Montagu's daughter, nor she who wrote the letter this morning to a poor battered author.

PS. I eat any plain joint, of the plainer order, beef or mutton :—and you know I care for nothing at dinner, so that it does not hurt me. Friends' company is the thing.

To a Friend

Offence and punishment

Wimbledon, 11 and 12 *August*, 1846.

. . . I find I made a great confusion of my *portion* of the legal expenses incurred by the *Examiner*, with the *whole* of them. That portion only amounted to £750, the whole being £1500. Of this £750 out of my pocket (which was quite enough), £250 went to pay for expenses (counsel, &c.) attendant on the *failure* of two Government prosecutions,—one for saying (*totidem verbis*) that 'of all monarchs since the Revolution, the successor of George III would have the finest opportunity of becoming nobly popular'; (think, nowadays, of being prosecuted for *that* !) and the other for copying from the *Stamford News* the paragraph against military flogging, alluded to the other day in the *Daily News*. (Think, now, this moment, of being prosecuted for *That* !) The £500 fine and two years' imprisonment was for ludicrously contrasting the *Morning Post's* picture of the Regent as an 'Adonis', &c. with the old and real fat state of the case, and for adding that his

Royal Highness had lived for 'upwards of half a century without doing anything to deserve the admiration of his contemporaries or the gratitude of posterity'. Words to that effect, and I believe better,—but I do not quite remember them. They might be easily ascertained by reference to Peel's Coffee-house, and the words of the *Post*, too.

Besides the fine, my imprisonment cost me several hundred pounds (I can't exactly say how many) in monstrous *douceurs* to the gaoler for *liberty to walk in the garden*, for help towards getting me permission to fit up rooms in the sick hospital, and for fitting up said rooms, or rather converting them from sorts of washhouses, hitherto uninhabited and unfloored, into comfortable apartments,—which I did too expensively,—at least as far as papering the sitting-room with a trellis of roses went, and having my ceiling painted to imitate an out-of-door sky. No notice, however, could be taken, I suppose, of any of *this* portion of the expenses, governments having nothing to do with the secret corruptions of gaolers or the pastorals of incarcerated poets: otherwise the prosecutions cost me altogether a good bit beyond a thousand pounds.

But perhaps it might be mentioned that I went to prison from all but a sick bed, having been just ordered by the physician *to go to the seaside*, and *ride* for the benefit of my health (pleasing dramatic contrast to the *verdict*!). I also declined, as I told you, to try avoiding the imprisonment by the help of Perry's offer of the famous secret 'Book'; and I further declined (as I think I also told you) to avail myself of an offer on the part of a royal agent (made, of course, in the guarded, though obvious

manner in which such offers are conveyed), to drop the prosecution, provided we would agree to drop all future hostile mention of the Regent. But of this, too, governments could not be expected to take notice—perhaps would regard it as an addition to the offence. This, however, I must add, that the whole attack on the Regent was owing, not merely to the nonsense of the *Post*, but to his violation of those promises of conceding the Catholic claims, to which his princely word stood pledged. The subject of the article was the '*Dinner on St. Patrick's day*'. All the Whig world was indignant at that violation; so were the Irish, of course, *vehemently*; and it was on the spur of this publicly indignant movement that I wrote what I did,—as angrily and as much in earnest in the serious part of what I said as I was derisive in the rest. I did not care for any factious object, nor was I what is called anti-monarchical. I didn't know Cobbett, or Henry Hunt, or any demagogue, *even by sight*, except Sir Francis Burdett, and him by sight alone. Nor did I ever see, or speak a word with them, afterwards. I knew nothing, in fact, of politics themselves, except in some of those large and, as it appeared to me, obvious phases, which, at all events, *have since become obvious to most people*, and in fighting for which (if a man can be said to fight for a 'phase'!) I suffered all that Tories could inflict upon me,—by expenses in law and calumnies in literature;—reform, Catholic claims, free trade, abolition of flogging, right of free speech, as opposed by attorneys-general. I was, in fact, all the while nothing but a poetic student, appearing in politics once a week, but given up entirely to letters almost all the rest of it,

and loving nothing so much as a book and a walk in the fields. I was precisely the sort of person, in these respects, which I am at this moment. As to George the Fourth, I aided, years afterwards, in publicly wishing him well—'years having brought the philosophic mind'. I believe I even expressed regret at not having given him the excuses due to all human beings (the passage, I take it, is in the book which Colburn called *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries*); *and when I consider that Moore has been pensioned, not only in spite of all his libels on him, but perhaps by very reason of their Whig partisanship, I should think it hard to be refused a pension purely because I openly suffered for what I had earnestly said.* I knew George the Fourth's physician, Sir William Knighton, who had been mine before I was imprisoned (it was *not* he who was the royal agent alluded to); and, if my memory does not deceive me, Sir William told me that George had been gratified by the book above mentioned. Perhaps he had found out, by Sir William's help, that I was not an ill-natured man, or one who could not outlive what was mistaken in himself or resentful in others. As to my opinions about Governments, the bad conduct of the Allies, and of Napoleon, and the old Bourbons, certainly made them waver as to what might be ultimately best, monarchy or republicanism; but they ended in favour of their old predilections; and no man, for a long while, has been less a republican than myself, monarchies and courts appearing to me salutary for the good and graces of mankind, and Americanisms anything but either. But nobody, I conceive, that knew my writings, or heard of me truly from others, ever took me for

a republican. William the Fourth saw or heard nothing of me to hinder his letting Lord Melbourne give me £200 out of the Royal Fund. Queen Victoria gave me another, through the same kind friend. She also went twice to see my play; and everybody knows how I praise and love her. *I do not think, therefore, in reference to the pension, that the public would care twopence about George the Fourth, one way or the other; or that if any remembered the case at all, they would connect the pension in the least with anything about him, but attribute it solely to the Queen's and Minister's goodness, and the wants of a sincere and not undeserving man of letters, distinguished for his loyal attachment.* I certainly think the £500 fine ought not to have been taken out of my pocket, or the other two £125 either; and I think also, that a liberal Whig minister might reasonably and *privately* think some compensation on those accounts due to me. *I have been fighting his own fight from first to last, and helping to prepare matters for his triumph.* But still the above, in my opinion, is what the public would think of the matter, *and my friends of the press could lay it entirely to the literary account.*

GEORGE GORDON NOEL, LORD BYRON

1788–1824

To Mr. Hodgson

Travel in Portugal

Lisbon, 16 *July*, 1809.

Thus far have we pursued our route, and seen all sorts of marvellous sights, palaces, convents, &c.,—which, being to be heard in my friend Hobhouse's forthcoming Book of Travels, I shall not anticipate by smuggling any account whatsoever to you in a private and clandestine manner. I must just observe, that the village of Cintra in Estremadura is the most beautiful, perhaps, in the world.

I am very happy here, because I loves oranges, and talks bad Latin to the monks, who understand it, as it is like their own,—and I goes into society (with my pocket pistols), and I swims in the Tagus all across at once, and I rides on an ass or a mule, and swears Portuguese, and have got bites from the mosquitoes. But what of that? Comfort must not be expected by folks that go a-pleasuring.

When the Portuguese are pertinacious, I say '*Carracho*!' — the great oath of the grandees, that very well supplies the place of 'Damme!'—and when dissatisfied with my neighbour, I pronounce him '*Ambra di merdo*'. With these two phrases, and a third, '*Avra bouro*', which signifieth

'Get an ass', I am universally understood to be a person of degree and a master of languages. How merrily we lives that travellers be!—if we had food and raiment. But, in sober sadness, anything is better than England, and I am infinitely amused with my pilgrimage, as far as it has gone.

To-morrow we start to ride post near 400 miles as far as Gibraltar, where we embark for Melita and Byzantium. A letter to Malta will find me, or to be forwarded, if I am absent. Pray embrace the Drury and Dwyer, and all the Ephesians you encounter. I am writing with Butler's donative pencil, which makes my bad hand worse. Excuse illegibility.

Hodgson! send me the news, and the deaths and defeats and capital crimes and the misfortunes of one's friends; and let us hear of literary matters, and the controversies and the criticisms. All this will be pleasant—'*Suave mari magno*, &c.' Talking of that, I have been sea-sick, and sick of the sea. Adieu.

To Thomas Moore

Announces his engagement

Newstead Abbey, 20 *Sept.* 1814.

Here 's to her who long
  Hath waked the poet's sigh!
The girl who gave to song
  What gold could never buy.

My dear Moore,

I am going to be married—that is, I am accepted, and one usually hopes the rest will follow. My mother of the Gracchi (that *are* to be),

you think too strait-laced for me, although the paragon of only children, and invested with 'golden opinions of all sorts of men', and full of 'most blest conditions' as Desdemona herself. Miss Milbanke is the lady, and I have her father's invitation to proceed there in my elect capacity,—which, however, I cannot do until I have settled some business in London, and got a blue coat.

She is said to be an heiress, but of that I really know nothing certainly, and shall not inquire. But I do know, that she has talents and excellent qualities; and you will not deny her judgement, after having refused six suitors and taken me.

Now, if you have anything to say against this, pray do; my mind's made up, positively fixed, determined, and therefore I will listen to reason, because now it can do no harm. Things may occur to break it off, but I will hope not. In the meantime I tell you (a *secret*, by the by,—at least till I know she wishes it to be public) that I have proposed and am accepted. You need not be in a hurry to wish me joy, for one mayn't be married for months. I am going to town to-morrow, but expect to be here, on my way there, within a fortnight.

If this had not happened, I should have gone to Italy. In my way down, perhaps you will meet me at Nottingham, and come over with me here. I need not say that nothing will give me greater pleasure. I must, of course, reform thoroughly; and, seriously, if I can contribute to her happiness, I shall secure my own. She is so good a person that—that—in short, I wish I was a better.

To John Murray

No bid for sweet voices

Venice, 6 *April*, 1819.

The second canto of Don Juan was sent, on Saturday last, by post, in four packets, two of four, and two of three sheets each, containing in all two hundred and seventeen stanzas, octave measure. But I will permit no curtailments. . . . You shan't make *canticles* of my cantos. The poem will please, if it is lively; if it is stupid, it will fail; but I will have none of your damned cutting and slashing. If you please, you may publish *anonymously*; it will perhaps be better; but I will battle my way against them all, like a porcupine.

So you and Mr. Foscolo, etc., want me to undertake what you call a 'great work'? an Epic Poem, I suppose or some such pyramid. I'll try no such thing; I hate tasks. And then 'seven or eight years'! God send us all well this day three months, let alone years. If one's years can't be better employed than in sweating poesy, a man had better be a ditcher. And works, too!—is *Childe Harold* nothing? You have so many '*divine*' poems, is it nothing to have written a *human* one? without any of your worn-out machinery. Why, man, I could have spun the thoughts of the four cantos of that poem into twenty, had I wanted to book-make, and its passion into as many modern tragedies. Since you want *length*, you shall have enough of *Juan*, for I'll make fifty cantos. . . .

Besides, I mean to write my best work in *Italian*, and it will take me nine years more thoroughly to

master the language ; and then if my fancy exist, and I exist too, I will try what I *can* do *really*. As to the estimation of the English which you talk of, let them calculate what it is worth, before they insult me with their insolent condescension.

I have not written for their pleasure. If they are pleased, it is that they chose to be so ; I have never flattered their opinions, nor their pride ; nor will I. Neither will I make 'Ladies' books'. '*al dilettar le femine e la plebe*'. I have written from the fullness of my mind, from passion, from impulse, from many motives, but not for their 'sweet voices'.

I know the precise worth of popular applause, for few scribblers have had more of it ; and if I chose to swerve into their paths, I could retain it, or resume it. But I neither love ye, nor fear ye ; and though I buy with ye and sell with ye, and talk with ye, I will neither eat with ye, drink with ye, nor pray with ye. They made me, without my search, a species of popular idol ; they, without reason or judgement, beyond the caprice of their good pleasure, threw down the image from its pedestal ; it was not broken with the fall, and they would, it seems, again replace it,—but they shall not.

You ask about my health : about the beginning of the year I was in a state of great exhaustion . . . and I was obliged to reform my 'way of life', which was conducting me from the 'yellow leaf' to the ground, with all deliberate speed. I am better in health and morals, and very much yours, &c.—

PS. I have read Hodgson's '*Friends*'. He is right in defending Pope against the bastard

pelicans of the poetical winter day, who add insult to their parricide, by sucking the blood of the parent of English *real* poetry,—poetry without fault,—and then spurning the bosom which fed them.

To the same

The cemetery at Bologna

Bologna, 7 *June*, 1819.

. . . I HAVE been picture-gazing this morning at the famous Domenichino and Guido, both of which are superlative. I afterwards went to the beautiful cemetery of Bologna, beyond the walls, and found, besides the superb burial-ground, an original of a Custode, who reminded me of the grave-digger in *Hamlet*. He has a collection of capuchins' skulls, labelled on the forehead, and taking down one of them, said, 'This was Brother Desiderio Berro, who died at forty—one of my best friends. I begged his head of his brethren after his decease, and they gave it me. I put it in lime, and then boiled it. Here it is, teeth and all, in excellent preservation. He was the merriest, cleverest fellow I ever knew. Wherever he went, he brought joy; and whenever any one was melancholy, the sight of him was enough to make him cheerful again. He walked so actively, you might have taken him for a dancer—he joked—he laughed—oh! he was such a Frate as I never saw before, nor ever shall again!'

He told me that he had himself planted all the cypresses in the cemetery; that he had the greatest

attachment to them and to his dead people; that since 1801 they had buried fifty-three thousand persons. In showing some older monuments, there was that of a Roman girl of twenty, with a bust by Bernini. She was a princess Bartorini, dead two centuries ago: he said that, on opening her grave, they had found her hair complete, and 'as yellow as gold'. Some of the epitaphs at Ferrara pleased me more than the more splendid monuments at Bologna; for instance:—

> '*Martini Luigi*
> *Implora pace.*'
> '*Lucrezia Picini*
> *Implora eterna quiete.*'

Can anything be more full of pathos? Those few words say all that can be said or sought: the dead had had enough of life; all they wanted was rest, and this they *implore*! There is all the helplessness, and humble hope, and deathlike prayer, that can arise from the grave—'*implora pace*'. I hope, whoever may survive me, and shall see me put in the foreigners' burying-ground at the Lido, within the fortress by the Adriatic, will see those two words, and no more, put over me. I trust they won't think of 'pickling, and bringing me home to Clod or Blunderbuss Hall'. I am sure my bones would not rest in an English grave, or my clay mix with the earth of that country. I believe the thought would drive me mad on my deathbed, could I suppose that any of my friends would be base enough to convey my carcass back to your soil. I would not even feed your worms, if I could help it.

So, as Shakespeare says of Mowbray, the

banished Duke of Norfolk, who died at Venice (see *Richard II*), that he, after fighting

> Against black Pagans, Turks, and Saracens,
> And toiled with works of war, retired himself
> To Italy, and there, at *Venice*, gave
> His body to that *pleasant* country's earth,
> And his pure soul unto his captain, Christ,
> Under whose colours he had fought so long.

Before I left Venice, I had returned to you your late, and Mr. Hobhouse's sheets of *Juan*. Don't wait for further answers from me, but address yours to Venice, as usual. I know nothing of my own movements; I may return there in a few days, or not for some time. All this depends on circumstances. I left Mr. Hoppner very well. . . . My daughter Allegra was well too, and is growing pretty; her hair is growing darker, and her eyes are blue. Her temper and her ways, Mr. Hoppner says, are like mine, as well as her features: she will make, in that case, a manageable young lady.

I have never heard anything of Ada, the little Electra of my Mycenae. . . . But there will come a day of reckoning, even if I should not live to see it. . . . What a long letter I have scribbled!

PS. Here, as in Greece, they strew flowers on the tombs. I saw a quantity of rose-leaves, and entire roses, scattered over the graves at Ferrara. It has the most pleasing effect you can imagine.

To the same

In rebellious mood

Bologna, 24 *Aug.* 1819.

I wrote to you by last post, enclosing a buffooning letter for publication, addressed to the buffoon Roberts, who has thought proper to tie a canister to his own tail. It was written off-hand, and in the midst of circumstances not very favourable to facetiousness, so that there may, perhaps, be more bitterness than enough for that sort of small acid punch:—you will tell me. Keep the *anonymous*, in any case: it helps what fun there may be. But if the matter grow serious about *Don Juan*, and you feel *yourself* in a scrape, or *me* either, *own that I am the author. I* will never *shrink*; and if *you* do, I can always answer you in the question of Guatimozin to his minister—each being on his own coals.

I wish that I had been in better spirits; but I am out of sorts, out of nerves, and now and then (I begin to fear) out of my senses. All this Italy has done for me, and not England: I defy all you, and your climate to boot, to make me mad. But if ever I do really become a Bedlamite, and wear a strait waistcoat, let me be brought back among you: your people will then be proper company.

I assure you what I here say and feel has nothing to do with England, either in a literary or personal point of view. All my present pleasures or plagues are as Italian as the opera. And, after all, they are but trifles; for all this arises from my 'Dama's' being in the country for three days (at Capofiume). But as I could never live but for

one human being at a time (and, I assure you, *that one* has never been *myself*, as you may know by the consequences, for the *selfish* are *successful* in life), I feel alone and unhappy.

I have sent for my daughter from Venice, and I ride daily, and walk in a garden, under a purple canopy of grapes, and sit by a fountain, and talk with the gardener of his tools, which seem greater than Adam's, and with his wife, and with his son's wife, who is the youngest of the party, and, I think, talks best of the three. Then I revisit the Campo Santo, and my old friend, the sexton, has two—but *one* the prettiest daughter imaginable; and I amuse myself with contrasting her beautiful and innocent face of fifteen with the skulls with which he has peopled several cells, and particularly with that of one skull, dated 1766, which was once covered (the tradition goes) by the most lovely features of Bologna—noble and rich. When I look at these, and at this girl—when I think of what *they were*, and what she must be—why then, my dear Murray, I won't shock you by saying what I think. It is little matter what becomes of us 'bearded men', but I don't like the notion of a beautiful woman's lasting less than a beautiful tree—than her own picture—her own shadow, which won't change so to the sun as her face to the mirror. I must leave off, for my head aches consumedly. I have never been quite well since the night of the representation of Alfieri's *Mirra*, a fortnight ago.

To Percy Bysshe Shelley

A trio of poets

Ravenna, 26 *April*, 1821.

The child continues doing well, and the accounts are regular and favourable. It is gratifying to me that you and Mrs. Shelley do not disapprove of the step which I have taken, which is merely temporary.

I am very sorry to hear what you say of Keats—is it *actually* true ? I did not think criticism had been so killing. Though I differ from you essentially in your estimate of his performances, I so much abhor all unnecessary pain, that I would rather he had been seated on the highest peak of Parnassus than have perished in such a manner. Poor fellow ! though with such inordinate self-love he would probably have not been very happy. I read the review of *Endymion* in the *Quarterly*. It was severe,—but surely not so severe as many reviews in that and other journals upon others.

I recollect the effect on me of the *Edinburgh* on my first poem ; it was rage, and resistance, and redress—but not despondency nor despair. I grant that those are not amiable feelings ; but, in this world of bustle and broil, and especially in the career of writing, a man should calculate upon his powers of *resistance* before he goes into the arena.

> Expect not life from pain nor danger free,
> Nor deem the doom of man reserved for thee.

You know my opinion of *that second-hand* school of poetry. You also know my high opinion of your own poetry,—because it is of *no* school. I read *Cenci*—but, besides that I think the *subject*

essentially *un*dramatic, I am not an admirer of our old dramatists, *as models*. I deny that the English have hitherto had a drama at all. Your *Cenci*, however, was a work of power, and poetry. As to *my* drama, pray revenge yourself upon it, by being as free as I have been with yours.

I have not yet got your *Prometheus*, which I long to see. I have heard nothing of mine, and do not know that it is yet published. I have published a pamphlet on the Pope controversy, which you will not like. Had I known that Keats was dead—or that he was alive and so sensitive—I should have omitted some remarks upon his poetry, to which I was provoked by his *attack* upon *Pope*, and my disapprobation of *his own* style of writing.

You want me to undertake a great poem—I have not the inclination nor the power. As I grow older, the indifference—*not* to life, for we love it by instinct—but to the stimuli of life, increases. Besides, this late failure of the Italians has latterly disappointed me for many reasons,—some public, some personal. My respects to Mrs. S.

PS. Could not you and I contrive to meet this summer ? Could not you take a run here *alone* ?

To Lady Byron

A plain statement of facts

Pisa, 17 *Nov.* 1821,

I HAVE to acknowledge the receipt of 'Ada's hair', which is very soft and pretty, and nearly as dark already as mine was at twelve years old, if I may judge from what I recollect of some in

Augusta's possession, taken at that age. But it don't curl,—perhaps from its being let grow.

I also thank you for the inscription of the date and name, and I will tell you why ;—I believe that they are the only two or three words of your handwriting in my possession. For your letters I returned ; and except the two words, or rather the one word, 'Household', written twice in an old account book, I have no other. I burnt your last note, for two reasons :—firstly, it was written in a style not very agreeable ; and, secondly, I wished to take your word without documents, which are the worldly resources of suspicious people.

I suppose that this note will reach you somewhere about Ada's birthday—the 10th of December, I believe. She will then be six, so that in about twelve more I shall have some chance of meeting her ;—perhaps sooner, if I am obliged to go to England by business or otherwise. Recollect, however, one thing, either in distance or nearness ;—every day which keeps us asunder should, after so long a period, rather soften our mutual feelings, which must always have one rallying-point as long as our child exists, which I presume we both hope will be long after either of her parents.

The time which has elapsed since the separation has been considerably more than the whole brief period of our union, and the not much longer one of our prior acquaintance. We both made a bitter mistake ; but now it is over, and irrevocably so. For, at thirty-three on my part, and a few years less on yours, though it is no very extended period of life, still it is one when the habits and thought

are generally so formed as to admit of no modification; and as we could not agree when younger, we should with difficulty do so now.

I say all this, because I own to you, that, notwithstanding everything, I considered our reunion as not impossible for more than a year after the separation;—but then I gave up the hope entirely and for ever. But this very impossibility of reunion seems to me at least a reason why, on all the few points of discussion which can arise between us, we should preserve the courtesies of life, and as much of its kindness as people who are never to meet may preserve perhaps more easily than nearer connexions. For my own part, I am violent, but not malignant; for only fresh provocations can awaken my resentments. To you, who are colder and more concentrated, I would just hint, that you may sometimes mistake the depth of a cold anger for dignity, and a worse feeling for duty. I assure you that I bear you *now* (whatever I may have done) no resentment whatever. Remember, that *if you have injured me* in aught, this forgiveness is something; and that, if I have *injured you*, it is something more still, if it be true, as the moralists say, that the most offending are the least forgiving.

Whether the offence has been solely on my side, or reciprocal, or on yours chiefly, I have ceased to reflect upon any but two things,—viz. that you are the mother of my child, and that we shall never meet again. I think if you also consider the two corresponding points with reference to myself, it will be better for all three.

To Mr. Barff

Sympathy with the Greeks

10 *March*, 1824.

Enclosed is an answer to Mr. Parruca's letter, and I hope that you will assure him from me, that I have done and am doing all I can to reunite the Greeks with the Greeks.

I am extremely obliged by your offer of your country-house (as for all other kindness) in case that my health should require my removal; but I cannot quit Greece while there is a chance of my being of any (even supposed) utility:—there is a stake worth millions such as I am, and while I can stand at all, I must stand by the cause. When I say this, I am at the same time aware of the difficulties and dissensions and defects of the Greeks themselves; but allowance must be made for them by all reasonable people.

My chief, indeed *nine-tenths* of my expenses here are solely in advances to or on behalf of the Greeks, and objects connected with their independence.

[*Enclosure, translated*]

To S. R. Parruca

10 *March*, 1824.

Sir,—I have the honour of answering your letter. My first wish has always been to bring the Greeks to agree among themselves. I came here by the invitation of the Greek Government, and I do not think that I ought to abandon Roumelia for the Peloponnesus until that Government shall desire it; and the more so, as this part is exposed in a

greater degree to the enemy. Nevertheless, if my presence can really be of any assistance in uniting two or more parties, I am ready to go anywhere, either as a mediator, or, if necessary, as a hostage. In these affairs I have neither private views, nor private dislike of any individual, but the sincere wish of deserving the name of the friend of your country, and of her patriots.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

1792–1822

To T. J. Hogg

His first marriage

[*No date. Postmark*, Rhayader.
Summer of 1811.]

My dear Friend,

You will perhaps see me before you can answer .this; perhaps not; Heaven knows! I shall certainly come to York, but *Harriet Westbrook* will decide whether now or in three weeks. Her father has persecuted her in a most horrible way, by endeavouring to compel her to go to school. She asked my advice: resistance, was the answer, at the same time that I essayed to mollify Mr. W. in vain! And in consequence of my advice *she* has thrown herself upon *my* protection.

I set off for London on Monday. How flattering a distinction!—I am thinking of ten million things at once.

What have I said? I declare, quite *ludicrous*. I advised her to resist. She wrote to say that resistance was useless, but that she would fly with me, and threw herself upon my protection. We shall have £200 a year; when we find it run short, we must live, I suppose, upon love! Gratitude and admiration, all demand that I should love her *for ever*. We shall see you at York. I will hear your arguments for matrimonialism, by which I am now

almost convinced. I can get lodgings at York, I suppose. Direct to me at Graham's, 18, Sackville Street, Piccadilly.

Your inclosure of £10 has arrived; I am now indebted to you £30. In spite of philosophy, I am rather ashamed of this unceremonious exsiccation of your financial river. But indeed, my dear friend, the gratitude which I owe you for your society and attachment ought so far to overbalance this consideration as to leave me nothing but that. I must, however, pay you when I can.

I suspect that the *strain* is gone for ever. This letter will convince you that I am not under the influence of a *strain*.

I am thinking at once of ten million things. I shall come to live near you, as Mr. Peyton.

Ever your most faithful friend.

I shall be at 18, Sackville Street; at least direct there. Do not send more cash; I shall raise supplies in London.

To William Godwin

An introduction

Keswick, 3 *Jan.* 1812.

You will be surprised at hearing from a stranger. No introduction has, nor in all probability ever will authorize that which common thinkers would call a liberty; it is, however, a liberty which, although not sanctioned by custom, is so far from being reprobated by reason, that the dearest interests of mankind imperiously demand that a

certain etiquette of fashion should no longer keep 'man at a distance from man', or impose its flimsy fancies between the free communication of intellect.

The name of Godwin has been used to excite in me feelings of reverence and admiration. I have been accustomed to consider him a luminary too dazzling for the darkness which surrounds him. From the earliest period of my knowledge of his principles, I have ardently desired to share, on the footing of intimacy, that intellect which I have delighted to contemplate in its emanations.

Considering, then, these feelings, you will not be surprised at the inconceivable emotions with which I learned your existence and your dwelling. I had enrolled your name in the list of the honourable dead. I had felt regret that the glory of your being had passed from this earth of ours. It is not so; you still live, and, I firmly believe, are still planning the welfare of human kind.

I have but just entered on the scene of human operations; yet my feelings and my reasonings correspond with what yours were. My course has been short, but eventful. I have seen much of human prejudice, suffered much from human persecution, yet I see no reason hence inferable which should alter my wishes for their renovation. The ill-treatment I have met with has more than ever impressed the truth of my principles on my judgement. I am young, I am ardent in the cause of philanthropy and truth; do not suppose that this is vanity; I am not conscious that it influences this portraiture. I imagine myself dispassionately describing the state of my mind. I am young; you have gone before me—I doubt not, are a

veteran to me in the years of persecution. Is it strange that, defying prejudice as I have done, I should outstep the limits of custom's prescription, and endeavour to make my desire useful by a friendship with William Godwin?

I pray you to answer this letter. Imperfect as may be my capacity, my desire is ardent and unintermitted. Half an hour would be at least humanely employed in the experiment. I may mistake your residence; certain feelings, of which I may be an inadequate arbiter, may induce you to desire concealment; I may not, in fine, have an answer to this letter. If I do not, when I come to London, I shall seek for you. I am convinced I could represent myself to you in such terms as not to be thought wholly unworthy of your friendship; at least, if desire for universal happiness has any claim upon your preference, that desire I can exhibit. Adieu! I shall earnestly await your answer.

To Thomas Hookham

A subscription for Hunt

February 1813.

My dear Sir,

I am boiling with indignation at the horrible injustice and tyranny of the sentence pronounced on Hunt and his brother; and it is on this subject that I write to you. Surely the seal of abjectness and slavery is indelibly stamped upon the character of England.

Although I do not retract in the slightest degree my wish for a subscription for the widows and children of those poor men hung at York, yet this

£1000 which the Hunts are sentenced to pay is an affair of more consequence. Hunt is a brave, a good, and an enlightened man. Surely the public, for whom Hunt has done so much, will repay in part the great debt of obligation which they owe the champion of their liberties and virtues ; or are they dead, cold, stone-hearted, and insensible—brutalized by centuries of unremitting bondage ? However that may be, they surely may be excited into some slight acknowledgement of his merits. Whilst hundreds of thousands are sent to the tyrants of Russia, he pines in a dungeon, far from all that can make life desired.

Well, I am rather poor at present ; but I have £20 which is not immediately wanted. Pray, begin a subscription for the Hunts ; put down my name for that sum, and, when I hear that you have complied with my request, I will send it you. Now, if there are any difficulties in the way of this scheme of ours, for the love of liberty and virtue, overcome them. Oh ! that I might wallow for one night in the Bank of England !

Queen Mab is finished and transcribed. I am now preparing the notes, which shall be long and philosophical. You will receive it with the other poems. I think that the whole should form one volume ; but of that we can speak hereafter.

As to the French *Encyclopédie*, it is a book which I am desirous—very desirous—of possessing, and if you could get me a few months' credit (being at present rather low in cash), I should very much desire to have it.

My dear sir, excuse the earnestness of the first part of my letter. I feel warmly on this subject, and I flatter myself that so long as your own

independence and liberty remain uncompromised, you are inclined to second my desires.

PS. If no other way can be devised for this subscription, will you take the trouble on yourself of writing an appropriate advertisement for the papers, inserting, by way of stimulant, my subscription ?

On second thoughts, I enclose the £20.

To Mr. Ollier

An article by Southey

Florence, 15 *Oct.* 1819.

Dear Sir,

The droll remarks of the *Quarterly*, and Hunt's kind defence, arrived as safe as such poison, and safer than such an antidote, usually do.

I am on the point of sending to you 250 copies of a work which I have printed in Italy ; which you will have to pay four or five pounds duty upon, on my account. Hunt will tell you the *kind of thing* it is, and in the course of the winter I shall send directions for its publication, *until the arrival of which directions, I request that you would have the kindness not* to open the box, *or, if by necessity it is opened, to abstain from observing yourself, or permitting others to observe, what it contains.* I trust this confidently to you, it being of consequence. Meanwhile, assure yourself that this work has no reference, direct or indirect, to politics, or religion, or personal satire, and that this precaution is merely literary.

The *Prometheus*, a poem in my best style, what-

ever that may amount to, will arrive with it, but in MS., which you can print and publish in the season. It is the most perfect of my productions.

Southey wrote the article in question, I am well aware. Observe the impudence of the man in speaking of himself. The only remark worth notice in this piece is the assertion that I imitate Wordsworth. It may as well be said that Lord Byron imitates Wordsworth, or that Wordsworth imitates Lord Byron, both being great poets, and deriving from the new springs of thought and feeling, which the great events of our age have exposed to view, a similar tone of sentiment, imagery, and expression. A certain similarity all the best writers of any particular age inevitably are marked with, from the spirit of that age acting on all. This I had explained in my *Preface*, which the writer was too disingenuous to advert to. As to the other trash, and particularly that lame attack on my personal character, which was meant so ill, and which I am not the man to feel, 't is all nothing. I am glad, with respect to that part of it which alludes to Hunt, that it should so have happened that I dedicate, as you will see, a work which has all the capacities for being popular to that excellent person. I was amused, too, with the finale; it is like the end of the first act of an opera, when that tremendous concordant discord sets up from the orchestra, and everybody talks and sings at once. It describes the result of my battle with their Omnipotent God; his pulling me under the sea by the hair of my head, like Pharaoh; my calling out like the devil who was *game* to the last; swearing and cursing in all comic and horrid oaths, like a French postilion on

Mount Cenis; entreating everybody to drown themselves; pretending not to be drowned myself when I *am* drowned; and lastly, *being* drowned.

You would do me a particular kindness if you would call on Hunt, and ask him when my parcel went, the name of the ship, and the name of the captain, and whether he has any bill of lading, which, if he has, you would oblige me by sending, together with the rest of the information, by return of post, addressed to the Post Office, Florence.

To Mrs. Hunt

Keats and some others

[Pisa] 11 *Nov.* 1820.

My best Marianne,

I am delighted to hear that you complain of me for not writing to you, although I have much more reason to complain of you for not writing to me. At least it promises me a letter from you, and you know with what pleasure we receive, and with what anxiety we expect intelligence from you—almost the only friends who now remain to us.

I am afraid that the strict system of expense to which you are limited annoys you all very much, and that Hunt's health suffers both from that and from the incredible exertions which I see by the *Indicators* and the *Examiners* that he is making. Would to Heaven that I had the power of doing you some good! but when you are sure that the wish is sincere, the bare expression of it may help to cheer you.

The Gisbornes are arrived, and have brought news of you, and some books, the principal part of

which, however, are yet to arrive by sea. Keats's new volume has arrived to us, and the fragment called *Hyperion* promises for him that he is destined to become one of the first writers of the age. His other things are imperfect enough, and, what is worse, written in the bad sort of style which is becoming fashionable among those who fancy that they are imitating Hunt and Wordsworth. But of all these things nothing is worse than ——, in spite of Hunt's extracting the only good stanzas, with his usual good nature. Indeed, *I* ought not to complain of Hunt's good nature, for no one owes so much to it. Is not the vulgarity of these wretched imitations of Lord Byron carried to a pitch of the sublime? His indecencies, too, both against sexual nature, and against human nature in general, sit very awkwardly upon him. He only affects the libertine: he is, really, a very amiable, friendly, and agreeable man, I hear. But is not this monstrous? In Lord Byron all this has an analogy with the general system of his character, and the wit and poetry which surround hide with their light the darkness of the thing itself. They contradict it even; they prove that the strength and beauty of human nature can survive and conquer all that appears most inconsistent with it. But for a writer to be at once filthy and dull is a crime against gods, men, and columns. For Heaven's sake do not show this to any one but Hunt, for it would irritate the wasp's nest of the irritable race of poets.

Where is Keats now? I am anxiously expecting him in Italy, when I shall take care to bestow every possible attention on him. I consider his a most valuable life, and I am deeply interested

in his safety. I intend to be the physician both of his body and his soul, to keep the one warm, and to teach the other Greek and Spanish. I am aware, indeed, in part, that I am nourishing a rival who will far surpass me; and this is an additional motive, and will be an added pleasure.

We are at this moment removing from the Bagni to Pisa, for the Serchio has broken its banks, and all the country about is under water. An old friend and fellow-townsman of mine, Captain Medwin, is on a visit to us at present, and we anxiously expect Keats, to whom I would write if I knew where to address.

Adieu, my dear Marianne. Write soon; kiss all the babes for me, and tell me news of them, and give my love to Bessy and Hunt.

To Leigh Hunt

A literary collaboration

Pisa, 26 *Aug.* 1821.

My dearest Friend,

Since I last wrote to you, I have been on a visit to Lord Byron at Ravenna. The result of this visit was a determination, on his part, to come and live at Pisa; and I have taken the finest palace on the Lung' Arno for him. But the material part of my visit consists in a message which he desires me to give you, and which, I think, ought to add to your determination—for such a one I hope you have formed—of restoring your shattered health and spirits by a migration to these 'regions mild of calm and serene air'.

He proposes that you should come out and go

shares with him and me, in a periodical work, to be conducted here; in which each of the contracting parties should publish all their original compositions and share the profits. He proposed it to Moore, but for some reason it was never brought to bear. There can be no doubt that the *profits* of any scheme in which you and Lord Byron engage, must, from various, yet co-operating reasons, be very great. As for myself, I am for the present only a sort of link between you and him, until you can know each other, and effectuate the arrangement; since (to entrust you with a secret which, for your sake, I withhold from Lord Byron) nothing would induce me to share in the profits, and still less, in the borrowed splendour of such a partnership. You and he, in different manners, would be equal, and would bring, in a different manner, but in the same proportion, equal stocks of reputation and success. Do not let my frankness with you, nor my belief that you deserve it more than Lord Byron, have the effect of deterring you from assuming a station in modern literature which the universal voice of my contemporaries forbids me either to stoop or to aspire to. I am, and I desire to be, nothing.

I did not ask Lord Byron to assist me in sending a remittance for your journey; because there are men, however excellent, from whom we would never receive an obligation, in the worldly sense of the word; and I am as jealous for my friend as for myself. But I suppose that I shall at last make up an impudent face, and ask Horace Smith to add to the many obligations he has conferred on me. I know I need only ask.

I think I have never told you how very much

I like your *Amyntas*; it almost reconciles me to translations. In another sense I still demur. You might have written another such a poem as the *Nymphs*, with no access of efforts. I am full of thoughts and plans, and should do something, if the feeble and irritable frame which incloses it was willing to obey the spirit. I fancy that then I should do great things. Before this you will have seen *Adonais*. Lord Byron, I suppose from modesty, on account of his being mentioned in it, did not say a word of *Adonais*, though he was loud in his praise of *Prometheus*, and, what you will not agree with him in, censure of the *Cenci*. Certainly, if *Marino Faliero* is a drama, the *Cenci* is not—but that between ourselves. Lord Byron is reformed, as far as gallantry goes, and lives with a beautiful and sentimental Italian lady, who is as much attached to him as may be. I trust greatly to his intercourse with you, for his creed to become as pure as he thinks his conduct is. He has many generous and exalted qualities, but the canker of aristocracy wants to be cut out.

JOHN KEATS

1795-1821

To John Hamilton Reynolds

Burns's cottage

Maybole, 11 *July* [1818].

My dear Reynolds,

. . . I am approaching Burns's cottage very fast. We have made continual inquiries from the time we saw his tomb at Dumfries. His name, of course, is known all about: his great reputation among the plodding people is, 'that he wrote a good *mony* sensible things'. One of the pleasantest means of annulling self is approaching such a shrine as the Cottage of Burns: we need not think of his misery—that is all gone, bad luck to it! I shall look upon it hereafter with unmixed pleasure, as I do my Stratford-on-Avon day with Bailey. I shall fill this sheet for you in the Bardie's country, going no further than this, till I get to the town of Ayr, which will be a nine miles' walk to tea.

We were talking on different and indifferent things, when, on a sudden, we turned a corner upon the immediate country of Ayr. The sight was as rich as possible. I had no conception that the native place of Burns was so beautiful; the idea I had was more desolate: his '*Rigs of Barley*' seemed always to me but a few strips of green on a cold hill—Oh, prejudice!—It was as rich as

Devon. I endeavoured to drink in the prospect, that I might spin it out to you, as the silkworm makes silk from mulberry leaves. I cannot recollect it. Besides all the beauty, there were the mountains of Arran Isle, black and huge over the sea. We came down upon everything suddenly; there were in our way the 'bonny Doon', with the brig that Tam o' Shanter crossed, Kirk Alloway, Burns's Cottage, and then the Brigs of Ayr. First we stood upon the Bridge across the Doon, surrounded by every phantasy of green in tree, meadow, and hill: the stream of the Doon, as a farmer told us, is covered with trees 'from head to foot'. You know those beautiful heaths, so fresh against the weather of a summer's evening; there was one stretching along behind the trees.

I wish I knew always the humour my friends would be in at opening a letter of mine, to suit it to them as nearly as possible. I could always find an egg-shell for melancholy, and, as for merriment, a witty humour will turn anything to account. My head is sometimes in such a whirl in considering the million likings and antipathies of our moments, that I can get into no settled strain in my letters. My wig! Burns and sentimentality coming across you and Frank Floodgate in the office. Oh, Scenery, that thou shouldst be crushed between two puns! As for them, I venture, the rascalliest in the Scotch region. I hope Brown does not put them in his journal: if he does, I must sit on the cutty-stool all next winter. We went to Kirk Alloway. 'A prophet is no prophet in his own country.' We went to the Cottage and took some whisky. I wrote a sonnet for the mere sake of writing some lines under the roof: they

are so bad I cannot transcribe them. The man at the cottage was a great bore with his anecdotes. I hate the rascal. His life consists in fuzy, fuzzy, fuzziest. He drinks glasses, five for the quarter, and twelve for the hour; he is a mahogany-faced old jackass who knew Burns: he ought to have been kicked for having spoken to him. He calls himself 'a curious old bitch', but he is a flat old dog. I should like to employ Caliph Vathek to kick him. Oh, the flummery of a birthplace! Cant! cant! cant! It is enough to give a spirit the guts-ache. Many a true word, they say, is spoken in jest—this may be because his gab hindered my sublimity: the flat dog made me write a flat sonnet. My dear Reynolds, I cannot write about scenery and visitings. Fancy is indeed less than a present palpable reality, but it is greater than remembrance. You would lift your eyes from Homer only to see close before you the real Isle of Tenedos. You would rather read Homer afterwards than remember yourself. One song of Burns's is of more worth to you than all I could think for a whole year in his native country. His misery is a dead weight upon the nimbleness of one's quill; I tried to forget it—to drink toddy without any care—to write a merry sonnet—it won't do—he talked, he drank with blackguards; he was miserable. We can see horribly clear, in the works of such a man, his whole life, as if we were God's spies. . . .

To Richard Woodhouse

The poetic character

[Hampstead, 27 *Oct.* 1818.

My dear Woodhouse,

Your letter gave me great satisfaction, more on account of its friendliness than any relish of that matter in it which is accounted so acceptable in the *genus irritabile.* The best answer I can give you is in a clerklike manner to make some observations on two principal points which seem to point like indices into the midst of the whole *pro* and *cor* about genius, and views, and achievements, and ambition, *et cætera.* 1st. As to the poetical character itself (I mean that sort, of which, if I am anything, I am a member; that sort distinguished from the Wordsworthian, or egotistical sublime; which is a thing *per se,* and stands alone), it is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing—it has no character—it enjoys light and shade—it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated—it has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things, any more than from its taste for the bright one, because they both end in speculation. A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no identity; he is continually in for, and filling, some other body. The sun, the moon, the sea, and men and women, who are creatures of impulse, are poetical, and have about them an unchangeable attribute; the poet has none, no identity. He is certainly

the most unpoetical of all God's creatures. If, then, he has no self, and if I am a poet, where is the wonder that I should say I would write no more? Might I not at that very instant have been cogitating on the characters of Saturn and Ops? It is a wretched thing to confess, but it is a very fact, that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical nature. How can it, when I have no nature? When I am in a room with people, if I ever am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then; not myself goes home to myself, but the identity of every one in the room begins to press upon me, [so] that I am in a very little time annihilated—not only among men; it would be the same in a nursery of children. I know not whether I make myself wholly understood: I hope enough so to let you see that no dependence is to be placed on what I said that day.

In the second place, I will speak of my views, and of the life I purpose to myself. I am ambitious of doing the world some good: if I should be spared, that may be the work of maturer years—in the interval I will assay to reach to as high a summit in poetry as the nerve bestowed upon me will suffer. The faint conceptions I have of poems to come bring the blood frequently into my forehead. All I hope is, that I may not lose all interest in human affairs—that the solitary indifference I feel for applause, even from the finest spirits, will not blunt any acuteness of vision I may have. I do not think it will. I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the beautiful, even if my night's labours should be burnt every morning,

and no eye ever shine upon them. But even now I am perhaps not speaking from myself, but from some character in whose soul I now live. . . .

TO PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Returning advice

Hampstead, 10 *Aug.* 1820.

MY DEAR SHELLEY,

I am very much gratified that you, in a foreign country, and with a mind almost over-occupied, should write to me in the strain of the letter beside me. If I do not take advantage of your invitation, it will be prevented by a circumstance I have very much at heart to prophesy. There is no doubt that an English winter would put an end to me, and do so in a lingering, hateful manner. Therefore, I must either voyage or journey to Italy, as a soldier marches up to a battery. My nerves at present are the worst part of me, yet they feel soothed that, come what extreme may, I shall not be destined to remain in one spot long enough to take a hatred of any four particular bedposts. I am glad you take any pleasure in my poor poem, which I would willingly take the trouble to unwrite, if possible, did I care so much as I have done about reputation. I received a copy of the *Cenci*, as from yourself, from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of—the poetry and dramatic effect, which by many spirits nowadays is considered the Mammon. A modern work, it is said, must have a purpose, which may be the God. An artist must serve Mammon; he must have 'self-con-

centration '—selfishness, perhaps. You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore. The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never sat with your wings furled for six months together. And is not this extraordinary talk for the writer of *Endymion*, whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards ? I am picked up and sorted to a pip. My imagination is a monastery, and I am its monk. I am in expectation of *Prometheus* every day. Could I have my own wish effected, you would have it still in manuscript, or be but now putting an end to the second act. I remember you advising me not to publish my first blights, on Hampstead Heath. I am returning advice upon your hands. Most of the poems in the volume I send you have been written above two years, and would never have been published but for a hope of gain ; so you see I am inclined enough to take your advice now. I must express once more my deep sense of your kindness, adding my sincere thanks and respects for Mrs. Shelley. In hope of soon seeing you—

To Charles Brown

A despairing cry

Naples, 1 *Nov.* [1820.]

My dear Brown,

Yesterday we were let out of quarantine, during which my health suffered more from bad air and the stifled cabin than it had done the whole voyage. The fresh air revived me a little, and I

hope I am well enough this morning to write to you a short calm letter ;—if that can be called one, in which I am afraid to speak of what I would fainest dwell upon. As I have gone thus far into it, I must go on a little ;—perhaps it may relieve the load of *wretchedness* which presses upon me. The persuasion that I shall see her no more will kill me. My dear Brown, I should have had her when I was in health, and I should have remained well. I can bear to die—I cannot bear to leave her. Oh, God ! God ! God ! Everything I have in my trunks that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear. The silk lining she put in my travelling cap scalds my head. My imagination is horribly vivid about her—I see her—I hear her. There is nothing in the world of sufficient interest to divert me from her a moment. This was the case when I was in England : I cannot recollect, without shuddering, the time that I was a prisoner at Hunt's, and used to keep my eyes fixed on Hampstead all day. Then there was a good hope of seeing her again—Now !—O that I could be buried near where she lives ! I am afraid to write to her—to receive a letter from her—to see her handwriting would break my heart—even to hear of her anyhow, to see her name written, would be more than I can bear. My dear Brown, what am I to do ? Where can I look for consolation or ease ? If I had any chance of recovery, this passion would kill me. Indeed, through the whole of my illness, both at your house and at Kentish Town, this fever has never ceased wearing me out. When you write to me, which you will do immediately, write to Rome (*poste restante*)—if she is well and happy, put a mark thus +; if—

Remember me to all. I will endeavour to bear my miseries patiently. A person in my state of health should not have such miseries to bear. Write a short note to my sister, saying you have heard from me. Severn is very well. If I were in better health I would urge your coming to Rome. I fear there is no one can give me any comfort. Is there any news of George ? O that something fortunate had ever happened to me or my brothers ! —then I might hope,—but despair is forced upon me as a habit. My dear Brown, for my sake, be her advocate for ever. I cannot say a word about Naples ; I do not feel at all concerned in the thousand novelties around me. I am afraid to write to her. I should like her to know that I do not forget her. Oh, Brown, I have coals of fire in my breast. It surprises me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery. Was I born for this end ? God bless her, and her mother, and my sister, and George, and his wife, and you, and all ! . . .

THOMAS HOOD

1799-1845

To Charles Dickens

American Notes

17 Elm Tree Road, 12 *Oct.* 1842.

Dear Dickens,

Can you let me have an early copy of the *American Notes* so that I may review it in the *New Monthly* ? Is it really likely to be ready as advertised ? I aim this at Devonshire Place, supposing you to be returned, for with these winds 't is no fit time for the coast. But your bones are not so weather unwise (for ignorance *is* bliss) as mine. I should have asked this by word of mouth in Devonshire Place, but the weather has kept me indoors. It is no fiction that the complaint, derived from Dutch malaria seven years ago, is revived by Easterly winds. Otherwise I have been better than usual, and 'never say die'. Don't forget about the Yankee Notes. I never had but one American friend, and lost him through *a good crop of pears.* He paid us a visit in England ; whereupon in honour of him, a pear tree, which had never borne fruit to speak of within memory of man, was loaded with ninety dozen of brown somethings. Our gardener said they were a *keeping* sort, and would be good at Christmas ; whereupon, as our Jonathan was on the eve of sailing for the States, we sent him a few dozens to dessert him on the voyage. Some he put at the

bottom of a trunk (he wrote to us) to take to America ; but he could not have been gone above a day or two, when all *our* pears began to rot! *His* would, of course, by sympathy, and I presume spoilt his linen or clothes, for I have never heard of him since. Perhaps he thought I had *done* him on purpose, and for sartin the tree, my accomplice, never bore any more pears, good or bad, after that supernatural crop.

Pray present my respects for me to Mrs. Dickens. How she must enjoy being at home and discovering her children, after her Columbusing, and only discovering America !

To the Manchester Athenaeum

The uses of literature

(From my bed)

17 Elm Tree Road, St. John's Wood, 18 *July*, 1843.

Gentlemen,

If my humble name can be of the least use for your purpose, it is heartily at your service, with my best wishes for the prosperity of the Manchester Athenaeum, and my warmest approval of the objects of that Institution.

I have elsewhere recorded my own deep obligations to Literature—that a natural turn for reading, and intellectual pursuits, probably preserved me from the moral shipwreck so apt to befall those who are deprived in early life of the paternal pilotage. At the very least my books kept me aloof from the ring, the dog-pit, the tavern, and the saloons, with their degrading orgies. For the closet associate of Pope and Addison, the mind

accustomed to the noble, though silent discourse of Shakespeare and Milton, will hardly seek, or put up with low company and slang. The reading animal will not be content with the brutish wallowings that satisfy the unlearned pigs of the world. Later experience enables me to depose to the comfort and blessing that literature can prove in seasons of sickness and sorrow; how powerfully intellectual pursuits can help in keeping the head from crazing, and the heart from breaking; nay, not to be too grave, how generous mental food can even atone for a meagre diet; rich fare on the paper, for short commons on the cloth.

Poisoned by the malaria of the Dutch marshes, my stomach for many months resolutely set itself against fish, flesh, or fowl; my appetite had no more edge than the German knife placed before me. But luckily the mental palate and digestion were still sensible and vigorous; and whilst I passed untasted every dish at the Rhenish table-d'-hôte, I could still enjoy my *Peregrine Pickle*, and the feast after the manner of the Ancients. There was no yearning towards calf's head *à la tortue*, or sheep's heart; but I could still relish Head *à la Brunnen*, and the *Heart of Mid-Lothian*. Still more recently it was my misfortune, with a tolerable appetite, to be condemned to Lenten fare, like Sancho Panza, by my physician, to a diet, in fact, lower than any prescribed by the Poor-Law Commissioners, all animal food, from a bullock to a rabbit, being strictly interdicted, as well as all fluids stronger than that which lays dust, washes pinafores, and waters polyanthus. But the feast of reason and the flow of soul were still mine!

Denied beef, I had Bulwer and Cowper; forbid-

den mutton, there was Lamb; and in lieu of pork, the great Bacon, or Hogg. Then as to beverage; it was hard, doubtless, for a Christian to set his face, like a Turk, against the juice of the grape. But, eschewing wine, I had still my Butler; and in the absence of liquor, all the Choice Spirits from Tom Browne to Tom Moore. Thus though confined physically to the drink that drowns kittens, I quaffed mentally, not merely the best of our own home-made, but the rich, racy, sparkling growths of France and Italy, of Germany and Spain; the champagne of Molière, the Monte Pulciano of Boccaccio, the hock of Schiller, and the sherry of Cervantes. Depressed bodily by the fluid that damps everything, I got intellectually elevated with Milton, a little merry with Swift, or rather jolly with Rabelais, whose Pantagruel, by the way, is equal to the best gruel with rum in it.

So far can Literature palliate, or compensate, for gastronomical privations. But there are other evils, great and small, in this world, which try the stomach less than the head, the heart, and the temper; bowls that will not roll right, well-laid schemes that will 'gang aglee', and ill winds that blow with the pertinacity of the monsoon. Of these Providence has allotted me a full share, but still, paradoxical as it may sound, my *burthen* has been greatly lightened by a *load of books*. The manner of this will be best understood by a *feline* illustration. Everybody has heard of the two Kilkenny cats, who devoured each other; but it is not so generally known, that they left behind them an orphan kitten, which, true to its breed, began to eat itself up, till it was diverted from the operation by a mouse. Now the human mind,

under vexation, is like that kitten, for it is apt to *prey upon itself*, unless drawn off by a new object, and none better for the purpose than a book. For example, one of Defoe's; for who, in reading his thrilling *History of the Great Plague*, would not be reconciled to a few little ones?

Many, many a dreary weary hour have I got over—many a gloomy misgiving postponed—many a mental and bodily annoyance forgotten by help of the tragedies, and comedies, of our dramatists and novelists! Many a trouble has been soothed by the still small voice of the moral philosopher; many a dragon-like care charmed to sleep by the sweet song of the poet! For all which I cry incessantly, not aloud, but in my heart, 'Thanks and honour to the glorious masters of the pen, and the great inventors of the press!' Such has been my own experience of the blessing and comfort of literature and intellectual pursuits; and of the same mind, doubtless, was Sir Humphry Davy, who went for *Consolations in Travel*, not to the inn, or the posting-house, but to his library and his books.

To Dr. Moir

A humourist to the last

[1845.]

Dear Moir,

God bless you and yours, and good-bye! I drop these few lines, as in a bottle from a ship water-logged, and on the brink of foundering, being in the last stage of dropsical debility; but though suffering in body, serene in mind. So without reversing my union-jack, I await my last lurch. Till which, believe me, dear Moir,

Yours most truly.

To Sir Robert Peel

A farewell letter

Devonshire Lodge, New Finchley Road, [1845].

Dear Sir,

We are not to meet in the flesh. Given over by my physicians and by myself, I am only kept alive by frequent instalments of mulled port wine. In this extremity I feel a comfort, for which I cannot refrain from again thanking you, with all the sincerity of a dying man,—and, at the same time, bidding you a respectful farewell.

Thank God my mind is composed and my reason undisturbed, but my race as an author is run. My physical debility finds no tonic virtue in a steel pen, otherwise I would have written one more paper—a forewarning one—against an evil, or the danger of it, arising from a literary movement in which I have had some share, a one-sided humanity, opposite to that Catholic Shakespearian sympathy, which felt with King as well as Peasant, and duly estimated the mortal temptations of both stations. Certain classes at the poles of Society are already too far asunder; it should be the duty of our writers to draw them nearer by kindly attraction, not to aggravate the existing repulsion, and place a wider moral gulf between Rich and Poor, with Hate on the one side and Fear on the other. But I am too weak for this task, the last I had set myself; it is death that stops my pen, you see, and not the pension.

God bless you, Sir, and prosper all your measures for the benefit of my beloved country.

ROBERT BROWNING

1812–1889

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

1806–1861

To Leigh Hunt

A joint epistle

Bagni di Lucca, 6 *Oct.* 1857.

Dear Leigh Hunt,

(It is hard to write, but you bade me do so; yet I had better say 'Master Hunt', as they used to call Webster or Ford.) A nine months' silence after such a letter as yours seems too strange even to you perhaps. So understand that you gave us more delight at once than we could bear, that was the beginning of the waiting to recover spirit and try and do one's feeling a little less injustice. But soon followed unexpected sorrows to us and to you, and the expression of even gratitude grew hard again. Certainly all this while your letter has been laid before our very eyes, and we have waited for a brighter day than ever came till we left Florence two months ago and more, then we brought it to 'answer' among the chestnut trees; but immediately on our arrival a friend was attacked by fever, and we were kept in anxiety about him for six weeks. At last he recovered sufficiently to leave for Florence, and (just think) our little boy became ill, for the first time in his

life, and gave us solicitude enough for a fortnight: it is nothing now that it is over; he is going about now almost as well as before, and we go away to-morrow, as I said. But I will try and get one, at least, of the joys I came to find here, and really write to you from this place, as I meant to do. '*I*'—you know it is my wife that I write for, though you entangle and distract either of us by the reverberations (so to speak) of pleasures over and above the pleasure you give us. I intend to say, that you praise that poem, and mix it up with praise of her very self, and then give it to me directly, and then give it to *her* with the pride you have just given me, and then it somehow comes back to me increased so far, till the effect is just as you probably intended. I wish my wife may know you more: I wish you may see and know her more, but you cannot live by her eleven years, as I have done—or yes, what cannot you do, being the man, the poet you are? This last word, I dare think, I have a right to say; I *have* always venerated you as a poet; I believe your poetry to be sure of its eventual reward; other people, not unlikely, may feel like me, that there has been no need of getting into feverish haste to cry out on what is; yet you, who wrote it, can leave it and look at other poetry, and speak so of it: how well of you!

I am still too near the production of *Aurora Leigh* to be quite able to see it all; my wife used to write it, and lay it down to hear our child spell, or when a visitor came,—it was thrust under the cushion then. At Paris, a year ago last March, she gave me the first six books to read, I having never seen a line before. She then wrote the

rest, and transcribed them in London, where I read them also. I wish, in one sense, that I had written and she had read it. . . . I shall commend myself to you by telling you this. Indeed, the proper acknowledgement of your letter seems to be that one should do something, not say something. If you were here, I might quite naturally begin repeating *Giaffar* or *Solomon*, and the rest. You would see whether I was not capable of getting all the good out of your praise.

While I write, there is a strange thing that happened last night impossible to get out of my thoughts. It may give you pain to tell you of it, yet if with the pain come triumphant memories and hopes, as I expect there will, you may choose the pain with them. What decides me to tell it is that I heard you years ago allude to the destruction of a volume of *Lamia, Isabella, &c., to be restored to you yet*—now you remember; also, I think, of your putting my name near Shelley's in the end of your letter, where you say 'since I lost Shelley'. Is it not strange that I should have transcribed for the first time, last night, the *Indian Serenade* that, together with some verses of Metastasio, accompanied that book? That I should have been reserved to tell the present possessor of them—to whom they were given by Captain Roberts—*what* the poem *was, and that it had been published*! It is preserved religiously; but the characters are all but illegible, and I needed a good magnifying-glass to be quite sure of such of them as remain. The end is that I have rescued three or four variations in the reading of that divine little poem, as one reads it, at least, in the *Posthumous Poems*. It is headed the *Indian*

Serenade (not *Lines to an Indian Air*). In the first stanza the seventh line is 'Hath led me'; in the second, the third line is 'And the champak's odours fail'; and the eighth, 'O! Beloved as thou art!' In the last stanza, the seventh line was, 'Oh, press it to thine own again.' Are not all these better readings? (even to the 'Hath' for 'Has'.) There, I give them you as you gave us Milton's hair. If I have mistaken in telling you, you will understand and forgive.

I think I will ask my wife to say a word or two so I shall be sure that you forgive. Now let my wife say the remainder. All I have wished to do—know how little likely it was that I should succeed in that—was to assure you of my pride and affectionate gratitude.—God bless you ever,

R. B.

Dear friend, I will say; for I feel it must be something as good as friendship that can forgive and understand this silence, so much like the veriest human kind of ingratitude. When I look back and think—all this time after that letter, and not a sign made—I wonder. Yet, if you knew! First of all, we were silent because we waited for information which you seemed to desire. . . . Then there were sadder reasons. Poor *Aurora*, that you were so more than kind to (oh, how can I think of it?), has been steeped in tears, and some of them of a very bitter sort. Your letter was addressed to my husband, you knowing by your delicate true instinct where your praise would give most pleasure; but I believe Robert had not the heart to write when I felt that I should not have the spirits to add a word in the proper key. When we came here from Florence a few months

ago to get repose and cheerfulness from the sight of the mountains, we said to ourselves that we would speak to you at ease—instead of which the word was taken from our own mouth, and we have done little but sit by sick beds and meditate on gastric fevers. So disturbed we have been—so sad! our darling precious child the last victim. To see him lying still on his golden curls, with cheeks too scarlet to suit the poor patient eyes, looking so frightfully like an angel! It was very hard. But this is over, I do thank God, and we are on the point of carrying back our treasure with us to Florence to-morrow, quite recovered, if a little thinner and weaker, and the young voice as merry as ever. You are aware that that child I am more proud of than twenty *Auroras*, even after Leigh Hunt has praised them. He is eight years old, has never been '*crammed*', but reads English, Italian, French, German, and plays the piano—then, is the sweetest child! sweeter than he looks. When he was ill, he said to me, 'You pet! don't be unhappy about *me*. Think it's a boy in the street, and be a little sorry, but not unhappy.' Who could not be unhappy, I wonder?

I never saw your book called the *Religion of the Heart*. It's the only book of yours I never saw, and I mean to wipe out that reproach on the soonest day possible. I receive more dogmas, perhaps (my 'perhaps' being in the dark rather), than you do. I believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ in the intensest sense—that he was God absolutely. But for the rest, I am very unorthodox—about the spirit, the flesh, and the devil, and if you would not let me sit by you, a great many churchmen wouldn't; in fact, churches do all of

them, as at present constituted, seem too narrow and low to hold true Christianity in its proximate developments. I, at least, cannot help believing them so.

My dear friend, can we dare, after our sins against you—can we dare *wish* for a letter from you sometimes? Ask, we dare not. May God bless you. Even if you had not praised me and made me so grateful, I should be grateful to you for three things—for your poetry (that first), then for Milton's hair, and then for the memory I have of our visit to you, when you sat in that chair and spoke so mildly and deeply at once.

Let me be ever affectionately yours,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

1816-1855

To a friend

Trials of a governess

July 1839.

I cannot procure ink, without going into the drawing-room, where I do not wish to go. . . . I should have written to you long since, and told you every detail of the utterly new scene into which I have lately been cast, had I not been daily expecting a letter from yourself, and wondering and lamenting that you did not write; for you will remember it was your turn. I must not bother you too much with my sorrows, of which, I fear, you have heard an exaggerated account. If you were near me, perhaps I might be tempted to tell you all, to grow egotistical, and pour out the long history of a private governess's trials and crosses in her first situation. As it is, I will only ask you to imagine the miseries of a reserved wretch like me, thrown at once into the midst of a large family—proud as peacocks and wealthy as Jews—at a time when they were particularly gay—when the house was filled with company—all strangers—people whose faces I had never seen before. In this state I had charge given me of a set of pampered, spoilt, turbulent children, whom I was expected constantly to amuse, as

well as to instruct. I soon found that the constant demand on my stock of animal spirits reduced them to the lowest state of exhaustion; at times I felt—and, I suppose, seemed—depressed. To my astonishment, I was taken to task on the subject by Mrs. ——, with a sternness of manner and a harshness of language scarcely credible; like a fool, I cried most bitterly. I could not help it; my spirits quite failed me at first. I thought I had done my best—strained every nerve to please her; and to be treated in that way, merely because I was shy and sometimes melancholy, was too bad. At first I was for giving all up and going home. But, after a little reflection, I determined to summon what energy I had, and to weather the storm. I said to myself, 'I have never yet quitted a place without gaining a friend; adversity is a good school; the poor are born to labour, and the dependent to endure.' I resolved to be patient, to command my feelings, and to take what came; the ordeal, I reflected, would not last many weeks, and I trusted it would do me good. I recollected the fable of the willow and the oak; I bent quietly, and now, I trust, the storm is blowing over me. Mrs. —— is generally considered an agreeable woman; so she is, I doubt not, in general society. Her health is sound, her animal spirits good, consequently she is cheerful in company; but oh! does this compensate for the absence of every fine feeling—of every gentle and delicate sentiment? She behaves somewhat more civilly to me now than she did at first, and the children are a little more manageable; but she does not know my character, and she does not wish to know it. I have never had five minutes' conversation with

her since I came, except while she was scolding me. I have no wish to be pitied, except by yourself; if I were talking to you I could tell you much more.

To William Wordsworth

Thanks for advice

[1840.]

. . . Authors are generally very tenacious of their productions, but I am not so much attached to this but that I can give it up without much distress. No doubt, if I had gone on, I should have made quite a Richardsonian concern of it. . . . I had materials in my head for half-a-dozen volumes. . . . Of course, it is with considerable regret I relinquish any scheme so charming as the one I have sketched. It is very edifying and profitable to create a world out of your own brains, and people it with inhabitants, who are so many Melchisedecs, and have no father nor mother but your own imagination. . . . I am sorry I did not exist fifty or sixty years ago, when the *Ladies' Magazine* was flourishing like a green bay tree. In that case, I make no doubt, my aspirations after literary fame would have met with due encouragement, and I should have had the pleasure of introducing Messrs. Percy and West into the very best society, and recording all their sayings and doings in double-columned close-printed pages. . . . I recollect, when I was a child, getting hold of some antiquated volumes, and reading them by stealth with the most exquisite pleasure. You give a correct description of the patient Grisels of

those days. My aunt was one of them; and to this day she thinks the tales of the *Ladies' Magazine* infinitely superior to any trash of modern literature. So do I; for I read them in childhood, and childhood has a very strong faculty of admiration, but a very weak one of criticism. . . . I am pleased that you cannot quite decide whether I am an attorney's clerk or a novel-reading dressmaker. I will not help you at all in the discovery; and as to my handwriting, or the ladylike touches in my style and imagery, you must not draw any conclusion from that—I may employ an amanuensis. Seriously, sir, I am very much obliged to you for your kind and candid letter. I almost wonder you took the trouble to read and notice the novelette of an anonymous scribe, who had not even the manners to tell you whether he was a man or a woman, or whether his 'C.T.' meant Charles Timms or Charlotte Tomkins.

To a friend

At school abroad

Brussels [*c. May* 1842].

I WAS twenty-six years old a week or two since; and at this ripe time of life I am a school-girl, and, on the whole, very happy in that capacity. It felt very strange at first to submit to authority instead of exercising it—to obey orders instead of giving them; but I like that state of things. I returned to it with the same avidity that a cow, that has long been kept on dry hay, returns to fresh grass. Don't laugh at my simile. It is

natural to me to submit, and very unnatural to command.

This is a large school, in which there are about forty externes, or day-pupils, and twelve pensionnaires, or boarders. Madame Héger, the head, is a lady of precisely the same cast of mind, degree of cultivation, and quality of intellect as Miss ——. I think the severe points are a little softened, because she has not been disappointed, and consequently soured. In a word, she is a married instead of a maiden lady. There are three teachers in the school—Mademoiselle Blanche, Mademoiselle Sophie, and Mademoiselle Marie. The two first have no particular character. One is an old maid, and the other will be one. Mademoiselle Marie is talented and original, but of repulsive and arbitrary manners, which have made the whole school, except myself and Emily, her bitter enemies. No less than seven masters attend, to teach the different branches of education—French, Drawing, Music, Singing, Writing, Arithmetic, and German. All in the house are Catholics except ourselves, one other girl, and the gouvernante of Madame's children, an Englishwoman, in rank something between a lady's-maid and a nursery governess. The difference in country and religion makes a broad line of demarcation between us and all the rest. We are completely isolated in the midst of numbers. Yet I think I am never unhappy; my present life is so delightful, so congenial to my own nature, compared to that of a governess. My time, constantly occupied, passes too rapidly. Hitherto both Emily and I have had good health, and therefore we have been able to work well. There is one individual of whom I

have not yet spoken—M. Héger, the husband of Madame. He is professor of rhetoric, a man of power as to mind, but very choleric and irritable in temperament. He is very angry with me just at present, because I have written a translation which he chose to stigmatize as '*peu correcte*'. He did not tell me so, but wrote the word on the margin of my book, and asked, in brief stern phrase, how it happened that my compositions were always better than my translations? adding that the thing seemed to him inexplicable. The fact is, some weeks ago, in a high-flown humour, he forbade me to use either dictionary or grammar in translating the most difficult English compositions into French. This makes the task rather arduous, and compels me every now and then to introduce an English word, which nearly plucks the eyes out of his head when he sees it. Emily and he don't draw well together at all. Emily works like a horse, and she has had great difficulties to contend with—far greater than I have had. Indeed, those who come to a French school for instruction ought previously to have acquired a considerable knowledge of the French language, otherwise they will lose a great deal of time, for the course of instruction is adapted to natives and not to foreigners; and in these large establishments they will not change their ordinary course for one or two strangers. The few private lessons that M. Héger has vouchsafed to give us, are, I suppose, to be considered a great favour; and I can perceive they have already excited much spite and jealousy in the school.

You will abuse this letter for being short and dreary, and there are a hundred things which I

want to tell you, but I have not time. Brussels is a beautiful city. The Belgians hate the English. Their external morality is more rigid than ours. To lace the stays without a handkerchief on the neck is considered a disgusting piece of indelicacy.

To a Friend

Curates to tea

[1845.]

You thought I refused you coldly, did you? It was a queer sort of coldness, when I would have given my ears to say Yes, and was obliged to say No. Matters, however, are now a little changed. Anne is come home, and her presence certainly makes me feel more at liberty. Then, if all be well, I will come and see you. Tell me only when I must come. Mention the week and the day. Have the kindness also to answer the following queries, if you can. How far is it from Leeds to Sheffield? Can you give me a notion of the cost? Of course, when I come, you will let me enjoy your own company in peace, and not drag me out a-visiting. I have no desire at all to see your curate. I think he must be like all the other curates I have seen; and they seem to me a self-seeking, vain, empty race. At this blessed moment, we have no less than three of them in Haworth parish—and there is not one to mend another. The other day, they all three, accompanied by Mr. S., dropped, or rather rushed, in unexpectedly to tea. It was Monday (baking-day), and I was hot and tired; still, if they had behaved quietly and decently, I would have served them out their tea in peace; but they began glorifying themselves, and abusing

Dissenters in such a manner, that my temper lost its balance, and I pronounced a few sentences sharply and rapidly, which struck them all dumb. Papa was greatly horrified also, but I don't regret it.

TO GEORGE HENRY LEWES

Herself and Miss Austen

12 *Jan.* 1848.

DEAR SIR,

I thank you then sincerely for your generous review; and it is with the sense of double content I express my gratitude, because I am now sure the tribute is not superfluous or obtrusive. You were not severe on *Jane Eyre*; you were very lenient. I am glad you told me my faults plainly in private, for in your public notice you touch on them so lightly, I should perhaps have passed them over, thus indicated, with too little reflection.

I mean to observe your warning about being careful how I undertake new works; my stock of materials is not abundant, but very slender; and besides, neither my experience, my acquirements, nor my powers, are sufficiently varied to justify my ever becoming a frequent writer. I tell you this, because your article in *Fraser* left in me an uneasy impression that you were disposed to think better of the author of *Jane Eyre* than that individual deserved; and I would rather you had a correct than a flattering opinion of me, even though I should never see you.

If I ever *do* write another book, I think I will have nothing of what you call 'melodrama'; I *think* so, but I am not sure. I *think*, too, I will

endeavour to follow the counsel which shines out of Miss Austen's 'mild eyes', 'to finish more and be more subdued'; but neither am I sure of that. When authors write best, or at least, when they write most fluently, an influence seems to waken in them, which becomes their master—which will have its own way—putting out of view all behests but its own, dictating certain words, and insisting on their being used, whether vehement or measured in their nature; new-moulding characters, giving unthought-of turns to incidents, rejecting carefully-elaborated old ideas, and suddenly creating and adopting new ones.

Is it not so? And should we try to counteract this influence? Can we indeed counteract it?

. . . .

Why do you like Miss Austen so very much? I am puzzled on that point. What induced you to say that you would have rather written *Pride and Prejudice*, or *Tom Jones*, than any of the Waverley Novels?

I had not seen *Pride and Prejudice* till I read that sentence of yours, and then I got the book. And what did I find? An accurate, daguerreotyped portrait of a commonplace face; a carefully-fenced, highly-cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers; but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy, no open country, no fresh air, no blue hill, no bonny beck. I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen, in their elegant but confined houses. These observations will probably irritate you, but I shall run the risk.

Now I can understand admiration of George Sand; for though I never saw any of her works

which I admired throughout (even *Consuelo*, which is the best, or the best that I have read, appears to me to couple strange extravagance with wondrous excellence), yet she has a grasp of mind, which, if I cannot fully comprehend, I can very deeply respect; she is sagacious and profound;—Miss Austen is only shrewd and observant.

Am I wrong—or, were you hasty in what you said? If you have time, I should be glad to hear further on this subject; if not, or if you think the questions frivolous, do not trouble yourself to reply.

TO THE SAME

The argument continued

18 *Jan.* 1848.

DEAR SIR,

I must write you one more note, though I had not intended to trouble you again so soon. I have to agree with you, and to differ from you.

You correct my crude remarks on the subject of the 'influence'; well, I accept your definition of what the effects of that influence should be; I recognize the wisdom of your rules for its regulation. . . .

What a strange lecture comes next in your letter! You say I must familiarize my mind with the fact, that 'Miss Austen is not a poetess, has no "sentiment"' (you scornfully enclose the word in inverted commas), 'no eloquence, none of the ravishing enthusiasm of poetry',—and then you add, I *must* 'learn to acknowledge her as *one of the greatest artists, of the greatest painters of human character*, and one of the writers with the nicest sense of means to an end that ever lived'.

The last point only will I ever acknowledge.

Can there be a great artist without poetry ?

What I call—what I will bend to, as a great artist then—cannot be destitute of the divine gift. But by *poetry*, I am sure, you understand something different to what I do, as you do by 'sentiment'. It is *poetry*, as I comprehend the word, which elevates that masculine George Sand, and makes out of something coarse, something Godlike. It is 'sentiment', in my sense of the term—sentiment jealously hidden, but genuine, which extracts the venom from that formidable Thackeray, and converts what might be corrosive poison into purifying elixir.

If Thackeray did not cherish in his large heart deep feeling for his kind, he would delight to exterminate ; as it is, I believe, he wishes only to reform. Miss Austen being, as you say, without 'sentiment', without *poetry*, maybe *is* sensible, real (more *real* than *true*), but she cannot be great.

I submit to your anger, which I have now excited (for have I not questioned the perfection of your darling ?) ; the storm may pass over me. Nevertheless, I will, when I can (I do not know when that will be, as I have no access to a circulating library), diligently peruse all Miss Austen's works, as you recommend. . . . You must forgive me for not always being able to think as you do, and still believe me, Yours gratefully.

To a friend

Illness and death of Emily Brontë

23 *Nov.* 1848.

I told you Emily was ill, in my last letter. She has not rallied yet. She is *very* ill. I believe,

if you were to see her, your impression would be that there is no hope. A more hollow, wasted, pallid aspect I have not beheld. The deep tight cough continues; the breathing after the least exertion is a rapid pant; and these symptoms are accompanied by pains in the chest and side. Her pulse, the only time she allowed it to be felt, was found to beat 115 per minute. In this state she resolutely refuses to see a doctor; she will give no explanation of her feelings, she will scarcely allow her feelings to be alluded to. Our position is, and has been for some weeks, exquisitely painful. God only knows how all this is to terminate. More than once, I have been forced boldly to regard the terrible event of her loss as possible, and even probable. But nature shrinks from such thoughts. I think Emily seems the nearest thing to my heart in the world.

10 *Dec.*

I hardly know what to say to you about the subject which now interests me the most keenly of anything in this world, for, in truth, I hardly know what to think myself. Hope and fear fluctuate daily. The pain in her side and chest is better; the cough, the shortness of breath, the extreme emaciation, continue. I have endured, however, such tortures of uncertainty on this subject that, at length, I could endure it no longer; and as her repugnance to seeing a medical man continues immutable,—as she declares 'no poisoning doctor' shall come near her,—I have written, unknown to her, to an eminent physician in London, giving as minute a statement of her

case and symptoms as I could draw up, and requesting an opinion. I expect an answer in a day or two. I am thankful to say that my own health at present is very tolerable. It is well such is the case; for Anne, with the best will in the world to be useful, is really too delicate to do or bear much. She too, at present, has frequent pains in the side. Papa is also pretty well, though Emily's state renders him very anxious.

. . . .

[*Tuesday.*]

I should have written to you before, if I had had one word of hope to say; but I have not. She grows daily weaker. The physician's opinion was expressed too obscurely to be of use. He sent some medicine, which she would not take. Moments so dark as these I have never known. I pray for God's support to us all. Hitherto He has granted it.

. . . .

21 *Dec.* 1848.

Emily suffers no more from pain or weakness now. She never will suffer more in this world. She is gone, after a hard, short conflict. She died on *Tuesday*, the very day I wrote to you. I thought it very possible she might be with us still for weeks; and a few hours afterwards, she was in eternity. Yes; there is no Emily in time or on earth now. Yesterday we put her poor, wasted, mortal frame quietly under the church pavement. We are very calm at present. Why should we be otherwise? The anguish of seeing her suffer is over; the spectacle of the pains of death is gone by; the funeral day is past. We feel she is at peace. No

need now to tremble for the hard frost and the keen wind. Emily does not feel them. She died in a time of promise. We saw her taken from life in its prime. But it is God's will, and the place where she is gone is better than that she has left.

God has sustained me, in a way that I marvel at, through such agony as I had not conceived. I now look at Anne, and wish she were well and strong; but she is neither; nor is papa. Could you now come to us for a few days? I would not ask you to stay long. Write and tell me if you could come next week, and by what train. I would try to send a gig for you to Keighley. You will, I trust, find us tranquil. Try to come. I never so much needed the consolation of a friend's presence. Pleasure, of course, there would be none for you in the visit, except what your kind heart would teach you to find in doing good to others.

To Mr. G. Smith

Thackeray and 'Esmond'

14 *Feb.* 1852.

My dear Sir,

It has been a great delight to me to read Mr. Thackeray's work; and I so seldom now express my sense of kindness that, for once, you must permit me, without rebuke, to thank you for a pleasure so rare and special. Yet I am not going to praise either Mr. Thackeray or his book. I have read, enjoyed, been interested, and after all, feel full as much ire and sorrow as gratitude and admiration. And still one can never lay down a book of his without the two last feelings having their part, be the subject or treatment what it may. In the first half of the book, what chiefly

struck me was the wonderful manner in which the writer throws himself into the spirit and letters of the times whereof he treats; the allusions, the illustrations, the style, all seem to me so masterly in their exact keeping, their harmonious consistency, their nice, natural truth, their pure exemption from exaggeration. No second-rate imitator can write in that way; no coarse scene-painter can charm us with an allusion so delicate and perfect. But what bitter satire, what relentless dissection of diseased subjects! Well, and this, too, is right, or would be right, if the savage surgeon did not seem so fiercely pleased with his work. Thackeray likes to dissect an ulcer or an aneurism; he has pleasure in putting his cruel knife or probe into quivering, living flesh. Thackeray would not like all the world to be good; no great satirist would like society to be perfect.

As usual, he is unjust to women; quite unjust. There is hardly any punishment he does not deserve for making Lady Castlewood peep through a keyhole, listen at a door, and be jealous of a boy and a milkmaid. Many other things I noticed that, for my part, grieved and exasperated me as I read; but then, again, came passages so true, so deeply thought, so tenderly felt, one could not help forgiving and admiring. . . .

But I wish he could be told not to care much for dwelling on the political or religious intrigues of the times. Thackeray, in his heart, does not value political or religious intrigues of any age or date. He likes to show us human nature at home, as he himself daily sees it; his wonderful observant faculty likes to be in action. In him this faculty is a sort of captain and leader; and if ever any

passage in his writings lacks interest, it is when this master-faculty is for a time thrust into a subordinate position. I think such is the case in the former half of the present volume. Towards the middle, he throws off restraint, becomes himself, and is strong to the close. Everything now depends on the second and third volumes. If, in pith and interest, they fall short of the first, a true success cannot ensue. If the continuation be an improvement upon the commencement, if the stream gather force as it rolls, Thackeray will triumph. Some people have been in the habit of terming him the second writer of the day; it just depends on himself whether or not these critics shall be justified in their award. He need not be the second. God made him second to no man. If I were he, I would show myself as I am, not as critics report me; at any rate, I would do my best. Mr. Thackeray is easy and indolent, and seldom cares to do his best. Thank you once more; and believe me—&c.

To the same

'Esmond' again

10 *Nov.* 1852.

. . . I have read the third volume of *Esmond*. I found it both entertaining and exciting to me; it seems to possess an impetus and excitement beyond the other two,—that movement and brilliancy its predecessors sometimes wanted, never fails here. In certain passages, I thought Thackeray used all his powers; their grand, serious force yielded a profound satisfaction. 'At last he puts forth his strength,' I could not help saying to myself. No character in the book strikes me as

more masterly than that of Beatrix; its conception is fresh, and its delineation vivid. It is peculiar; it has impressions of a new kind—new at least, to me. Beatrix is not, in herself, all bad. So much does she sometimes reveal of what is good and great as to suggest this feeling—you would think she was urged by a Fate. You would think that some antique doom presses on her house, and that once in so many generations its brightest ornament was to become its greatest disgrace. At times, what is good in her struggles against this terrible destiny, but the Fate conquers. Beatrix cannot be an honest woman and a good man's wife. She 'tries,' and she *cannot*'. Proud, beautiful, and sullied, she was born what she becomes, a king's mistress. I know not whether you have seen the notice in the *Leader*; I read it just after concluding the book. Can I be wrong in deeming it a notice tame, cold, and insufficient? With all its professed friendliness, it produced on me a most disheartening impression. Surely, another sort of justice than this will be rendered to *Esmond* from other quarters. One acute remark of the critic is to the effect that Blanche Amory and Beatrix are identical—sketched from the same original! To me they are about as identical as a weazel and a royal tigress of Bengal; both the latter are quadrupeds,—both the former, women.

The World's Classics

THE best recommendation of **The World's Classics** is the books themselves, which have earned unstinted praise from critics and all classes of the public. Some two million copies have been sold, and of the volumes already published nearly one-half have gone into a second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, or tenth impression. It is only possible to give so much for the money when large sales are certain. The clearness of the type, the quality of the paper, the size of the page, the printing, and the binding—from the cheapest to the best—cannot fail to commend themselves to all who love good literature presented in worthy form. That a high standard is insisted upon is proved by the list of books already published and of those on the eve of publication. A great feature is the brief critical introductions written by leading authorities of the day. The volumes of The World's Classics are obtainable, bound in cloth and leather, at the prices given on page 1; and special attention is directed to the sultan-red limp leather style, which is unsurpassable in leather bindings at the price of 1/6 net.

January, 1915.

THE WORLD'S CLASSICS

LIST OF THE SERIES

The figures in parentheses denote the number of the book in the series

Aeschylus. The Seven Plays Translated by LEWIS CAMPBELL. (117)
Ainsworth (W. Harrison). The Tower of London (162)
A Kempis (Thomas). Of the Imitation of Christ. (49)
Aristophanes. Frere's translation of the Acharnians, Knights, Birds, and Frogs Introduction by W W MERRY (134)
Arnold (Matthew). Poems. Intro by Sir A T QUILLER-COUCH (85)
Aurelius (Marcus). The Thoughts A new translation by JOHN JACKSON (60)
Austen (Jane). Emma Introduction by E V LUCAS (129)
Bacon. The Advancement of Learning, and the New Atlantis Introduction by Professor CASE (93)
Essays (24)
Barham. The Ingoldsby Legends (9)
Barrow (Sir John). The Mutiny of the Bounty Introduction by Admiral Sir CYPRIAN BRIDGE (195)
Betham-Edwards (M.) Lord of the Harvest Introduction by FREDERIC HARRISON (194)
Blackmore (R. D.). Lorna Doone (171)
Borrow. The Bible in Spain (75)
Lavengro (66)
The Romany Rye. (73)
Bronte Sisters.
Charlotte Bronte. Jane Eyre. (1)
Shirley (14)
Villette (47)
The Professor, and the Poems of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Bronte Introduction by THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON. (78)
Emily Bronte. Wuthering Heights (10)
Anne Bronte. Agnes Grey (141)
The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (67)
Brown (Dr. John). Horae Subsecivae Intro by AUSTIN DOBSON. (118)
Browning (Elizabeth Barrett). Poems A Selection (176)
Browning (Robert). Poems and Plays, 1833-1842 (58)
Poems, 1842-1864 (137)
Buckle. The History of Civilization in England. 3 vols. (41, 48, 53)
Bunyan. The Pilgrim's Progress (12)
Burke. Works. 6 vols
Vol I General Introduction by Judge WILLIS and Preface by F W. RAFFETY. (71)
Vols II, IV, V, VI. Prefaces by F W. RAFFETY (81 112-114)
Vol III Preface by F H. WILLIS. (111)

List of the Series—*continued*

Burns. Poems. (34)

Butler. The Analogy of Religion Edited, with Notes by W E GLADSTONE. (136)

Byron. Poems: A Selection. (180)

Carlyle. On Heroes and Hero-Worship (62)

Past and Present Introduction by G K CHESTERTON (153)

Sartor Resartus. (19)

The French Revolution Introduction by C. R L FLETCHER 2 vols (125, 126)

The Life of John Sterling Introduction by W HALE WHITE (144)

Cervantes. Don Quixote. Translated by C JERVAS. Introduction and Notes by J FITZMAURICE-KELLY 2 vols With a frontispiece (130, 131)

Chaucer. The Canterbury Tales. (76)

Chaucer. The Works of From the text of Professor SKEAT 3 vols Vol I (42), Vol II (56), Vol III, containing the whole of the Canterbury Tales (76)

Cobbold. Margaret Catchpole Intro by CLEMENT SHORTER (119)

Coleridge. Poems Introduction by Sir A T QUILLER-COUCH (99)

Cooper (T. Fenimore). The Last of the Mohicans (163)

Cowper. Letters Selected with Introduction, by E V LUCAS (138)

Darwin. The Origin of Species With a Note by GRANT ALLEN. (11)

Defoe. Captain Singleton Introduction by THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON (82)

Robinson Crusoe (17)

De Quincey. Confessions of an English Opium-Eater (23)

Dickens. Great Expectations With 6 Illustrations by WARWICK GOBLE (128)

Oliver Twist (8)

Pickwick Papers. With 43 Illustrations by SEYMOUR and 'PHIZ.' 2 vols (120, 121)

Tale of Two Cities. (38)

Dufferin (Lord). Letters from High Latitudes. Illustrated. With Introduction by R W MACAN. (158)

Eliot (George). Adam Bede (63)

Felix Holt. Introduction by VIOLA MEYNELL (179)

Romola Introduction by VIOLA MEYNELL (178)

Scenes of Clerical Life. Introduction by ANNIE MATHESON (155)

Silas Marner, The Lifted Veil, and Brother Jacob. Introduction by THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON. (80)

The Mill on the Floss (31)

Emerson. English Traits, and Representative Men (30)

Essays. First and Second Series. (6)

List of the Series—*continued*

English Essays. Chosen and arranged by W PEACOCK. (32)

English Essays, 1600-1900 (Book of). Chosen by S V. MAKOWER and B H BLACKWELL. (172)

English Letters. (Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries) Selected and edited by M. DUCKITT and H WRAGG (192)

English Prose from Mandeville to Ruskin. Chosen and arranged by W. PEACOCK. (45)

English Short Stories. (Nineteenth Century) Introduction by Prof HUGH WALKER (193)

English Songs and Ballads. Compiled by T. W H CROSLAND (13)

English Speeches, from Burke to Gladstone. Selected by EDGAR R JONES, M P (191)

Fielding. Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon Introduction and Notes by AUSTIN DOBSON 2 Illustrations (142)

Galt (John). The Entail. Introduction by JOHN AYSCOUGH (177)

Gaskell (Mrs.). Introductions by CLEMENT SHORTER.

Cousin Phillis, and other Tales, etc. (168)

Cranford, The Cage at Cranford, and The Moorland Cottage (110)
The 'Cage' has not hitherto been reprinted

Lizzie Leigh, The Grey Woman, and other Tales, etc. (175)

Mary Barton (86)

North and South. (154)

Round the Sofa (190)

Ruth (88)

Round the Sofa. (190)

Right at Last, and other Stories (202)

Sylvia's Lovers (156)

Wives and Daughters. (157)

Gibbon. Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. With Maps. 7 vols (35, 44, 51, 55, 64, 69, 74)

Autobiography Introduction by J B BURY (139)

Goethe. Faust, Part I (with Marlowe's Dr Faustus) Translated by JOHN ANSTER Introduction by Sir A. W WARD (135)

Goldsmith. Poems Introduction and Notes by AUSTIN DOBSON. (123)

The Vicar of Wakefield. (4)

Grant (James). The Captain of the Guard. (159)

Hawthorne. The Scarlet Letter (26)

Hazlitt. Lectures on the English Comic Writers. Introduction by R BRIMLEY JOHNSON (124)

Sketches and Essays (15)

Spirit of the Age. (57)

Table-Talk (5)

Winterslow. (25)

Herbert (George). Poems. Introduction by ARTHUR WAUGH. (109)

Herrick. Poems. (16)

List of the Series—*continued*

List of the Series—*continued*

Motley. Rise of the Dutch Republic Introduction by CLEMENT SHORTER 3 vols (96, 97 98)

Palgrave. The Golden Treasury With additional Poems, including FITZGERALD'S translation of Omar Khayyám. (133)

Poe (Edgar Allan). Tales of Mystery and Imagination. (21)

Porter (Jane). The Scottish Chiefs. (161)

Prescott (W. H.). History of the Conquest of Mexico Introduction by Mrs ALEC-TWEEDIE 2 vols (197, 198)

Reid (Mayne). The Rifle Rangers With 6 Illustrations by J. E. SUTCLIFFE (166)

The Scalp Hunters. With 6 Illustrations by A H COLLINS. (167)

Reynolds (Sir Joshua). The Discourses, and the Letters to 'The Idler' Introduction by AUSTIN DOBSON (149)

Rossetti (Christina). Goblin Market, The Prince's Progress, and other Poems (184)

Rossetti (D. G.). Poems and Translations, 1850-1870 (185)

Ruskin. (*Ruskin House Editions by arrangement with George Allen and Company, Ltd*)

'A Joy for Ever' and The Two Paths Illustrated (147)

Sesame and Lilies, and The Ethics of the Dust (145)

Time and Tide, and The Crown of Wild Olive (146)

Unto this Last, and Munera Pulveris (148)

Scott. Ivanhoe (29)

Lives of the Novelists. Introduction by AUSTIN DOBSON (94)

Poems A Selection (186)

Selected Speeches on British Foreign Policy. Edited by EDGAR R JONES M.P (201)

Shakespeare. Plays and Poems. With a Preface by A C. SWINBURNE and general Introductions to the several plays and poems by EDWARD DOWDEN, and a Note by T WATTS DUNTON on the special typographical features of this Edition 9 vols

Comedies 3 vols (100, 101, 102)

Histories and Poems. 3 vols (103, 104, 105)

Tragedies 3 vols (106, 107, 108)

Shakespeare's Contemporaries. Six Plays by BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, DEKKER, WEBSTER, and MASSINGER Edited by C B WHEELER (199)

Shelley. Poems A Selection (187)

Sheridan. Plays Introduction by JOSEPH KNIGHT. (79)

Smith (Adam). The Wealth of Nations 2 vols. (54, 59)

Smith (Alexander). Dreamthorp, with Selections from Last Leaves. Introduction by Prof HUGH WALKER. (200)

Smollett. Travels through France and Italy. Introduction by THOMAS SECCOMBE. (90)

Sophocles. The Seven Plays Translated by the late LEWIS CAMPBELL. (116)

List of the Series—*continued*

Southey (Robert). Letters Selected, with an Introduction and Notes, by MAURICE H FITZGERALD. (169)
Sterne. Tristram Shandy (40)
Swift. Gulliver's Travels (20)
Tennyson (Lord). Poems. (3)
Thackeray. Book of Snobs, Sketches and Travels in London, &c. (50)
Henry Esmond (28)
Pendennis Introduction by EDMUND GOSSE. 2 vols. (91, 92)
Thoreau. Walden. Introduction by THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON (68)
Tolstoy. Essays and Letters. Translated by AYLMER MAUDE (46)
Twenty-three Tales. Translated by L and A MAUDE (72)
Trollope. The Three Clerks Introduction by W. TEIGNMOUTH SHORE (140)
Virgil. Translated by DRYDEN (37)
Watts-Dunton (Theodore). Aylwin. (52)
Wells (Charles). Joseph and his Brethren With an Introduction by ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE, and a Note on Rossetti and Charles Wells by THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON. (143)
White (Gilbert). History of Selborne (22)
Whittier. Poems. A Selection (188)
Wordsworth. Poems: A Selection (189)

Other Volumes in Preparation

Bookcases for the World's Classics

To hold 50 Volumes ordinary paper, or 100 Volumes thin paper:

In Fumed Oak, or Hazel Pine, polished, with two fixed shelves. (22 x 21½ x 4¾ inches) . . . 0 6 0

To hold 100 Volumes ordinary paper, or 200 Volumes thin paper:

In Mahogany, French Stained and Ebonized, with fancy ornamental top, and three adjustable shelves, best cabinet make. (44 x 36 x 6 inches) 1 10 0

OF ALL BOOKSELLERS

HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON, EDINBURGH, GLASGOW
NEW YORK, TORONTO, MELBOURNE & BOMBAY